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# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
SPEECH AT THE REMEMBRANCE DRIVEWAY CEREMONY, BASS HILL,  
1 SEPTEMBER 1995**

## **E&OE PROOF COPY**

Thank you for those very kind words, Major General Latchford. Could I recognise the Mayor, Councillor Max Parker, other distinguished members of the Council, my Parliamentary colleague, Doug Shedden, members of the Remembrance Driveway Committee and ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here on this occasion. Indeed I have been delighted with the Australia Remembers ceremonies over the course of this year and I think it has been a good thing for our country, a good thing for the soul of the country, to remember those who fought for us and those who died for us. And, in doing this, we are saying that every Australian is special. Every Australian particularly who fought for the liberties that we enjoy and especially those who died for us. And that is why we are here to see this Remembrance Driveway extended and to make that memory clear.

It is, I think, very poignant that this week we see this trouble in Sarajevo where the First World War really began 80 years ago, the same city. And it is a bit depressing to think that 80 years later, we are not free of these sorts of conflicts and it makes it very obvious that we are not because the conflict is in exactly the same place as it began. And we have spent most of this century scrambling out of it. The First World War, of course, saw carnage on a scale unequalled in human history and then it set up the conditions, of course, for the rise of Nazism in Europe and Fascism in Italy and, as a consequence, then with militarism in Japan we saw the Second World War.

And I know that the presumption is, of course, for the victors that the righteous people won, the good guys won. But, of course, we nearly didn't win in Europe. Had Hitler invaded Britain in 1940, and had he emasculated the British Army in Dunkirk, we would have had great difficulty in getting a beach-head in Normandy or anywhere else in Europe. And had he not made the mistake of attacking the Russians - who carried the war effort and the burden of the war, really, from 1941 to 1944 - then we would have seen a

different world in which Japan's expansionism may have been more profitable for them, though it would have taken time to build the United States military machine up. Countries, like Australia, would have been under even greater threats than in fact we finally were.

So it would have been a different world and one can't say whether the democracies would have triumphed in the final analysis. In the Pacific, I think, we would. But, again, with a neutral Russia, one even wonders about that.

One thing is for certain, there was great sacrifice made all the way through and we have enjoyed, now, 50 years of peace which is one of the longest periods - certainly the longest period in this century. But one we rejoice in and one that we thank those who had to fight and, of course, who paid the greatest sacrifice of all.

These are the things we remember and we want to teach our children about these things, that liberty always come with a price and the freedoms we have taken to be our own and are endemic to our way of life are not necessarily part of the way of life of many people around the world and that the price of liberty and freedom can often be an expensive one and many Australians have paid the price.

The Second World War, of course, is the time when Australia's sovereignty was threatened. It wasn't threatened in the First World War, directly. It certainly was threatened, directly, in the Second World War and this was the fight to save Australia and Australia was saved, in part, by the gallantry of Australian servicemen and women, particularly in the campaigns in the Pacific, in Papua New Guinea - where I am going in another week or so - in places like Kokoda and, of course, before that in the Middle East and in Europe.

So this was great conflict and I think that we make clear that for those who fought and died that it just had to mean something, that 50 years later it just shouldn't be something that has happened in the past which has scant attention paid to it. But that it had to mean something and that we remember, that we do remember these people and that our children will know about it and they will remember it too.

So I remember the Remembrance Driveway as being begun in my youth because I used to motor around here - not in a car, but on a bicycle - past those trees and we were conscious then what they meant. We have been conscious since, probably not as conscious as we should be, but now of course our consciousness about it will be renewed by this new endeavour and stands of trees which are there to grace this area and to refresh our memory and to pay tribute to these people.

I am particularly delighted that so many young Australians can be associated with this. The LEAP Program is a program which has seen part of the Greening of Australia right across the country. It has been done by young

people with enthusiasm, under the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training programs, and we thank them most sincerely for their efforts and for their dedication and underline the fact that this young generation of Australians have felt more poignantly the value of Australia's environment and its nature, than other generations before them have. And it is really to them we look for the preservation of this great continent we have been bequeathed, to keep it in the kind of environmental shape, to have respect and regard for it and to, perhaps, try and repair some of the thoughtless damage which has been done.

Well here we are doing that to a dual purpose, to repair it, to replant it, but to do so in memory of the people who served and were lost. So this is a nice thing to do. I am delighted that the Committee has committed itself to this project. Also, I am very pleased that the Roads and Traffic Authority can be involved.

As is, of course, Bankstown City Council, which has always had I think a good social heart and a good understanding of these things. But always more importantly than all that, the community of this area which has always been quite a clannish community, one that has always felt a sense of community. And I think if the Second World War commemoration meant anything, they really celebrate community action because the things we always feel good about are the things we do together.

And I suppose the biggest thing we have done together, as a nation, is defend this country in the Second World War and it is that community action we remember and that we commemorate. Again, it is the community action here - the community action by the Committee, and the young people, and the Government, and the Council - but it is the community action of the people of the area of Bankstown, which has in this case Bass Hill, which has of course always given support to community values and to community aspirations.

So I am pleased to be back here. I used to drive down that road to the drive-in theatre, years ago, when it used to be there and around these grounds on a bicycle. But they will always be special places to me. More special because of the things we have done today. Congratulations and thanks.

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