



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE JOHN HOWARD MP
AT THE OPENING OF THE PRIME MINISTERS' MEMORIAL GARDEN
AND THE DEDICATION OF THE MENZIES MEMORIAL
FRIDAY 7 JUNE 1996, MELBOURNE**

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Thank you very much. To Jeff Kennett, the Premier of Victoria, and Mrs Kennett, to the Honourable Gough Whitlam, former Prime Minister of Australia, to Mr and Mrs Henderson, to Lady Sonia McMahon, to the members of the Holt family, and to all other distinguished guests and my Parliamentary colleagues and most particularly to the Reverend Fred McKay, a great Australian and a great family friend and confidant of the late Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies and Dame Pattie Menzies. Also I acknowledge the presence of Mr Ivan Deveson, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

I want first of all, ladies and gentlemen, to thank the Victorian Government and particularly the Premier of Victoria for his initiative in promoting and establishing this Memorial Garden and also to acknowledge the contribution of Mr Ron Walker who conceived the idea. It is, as Jeff Kennett said, a growing disposition in the Australian community to take a greater interest in the history of this country and the contribution of people from all walks of life and from all shades of political opinion who formed this country and then contributed to its development.

Perhaps as that distinguished historian, Geoffrey Blainey, has acknowledged, that as we grow ever closer to the day when there are no Australians left alive who participated in many of the great formative events of our early years - and we are only a few years away from the time that no people will be left who served in the first War and the ages of those who experienced the traumatic years of the Great Depression are now growing older and the ranks have grown inevitably thinner - it is only natural that when we look back with greater interest and greater nostalgia towards the past. And to have a Memorial Garden particularly committed to the recollection and memory of former Prime Ministers of Australia does make a very valuable contribution to building a sense of pride and interest in Australia's history.

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And it is in every way appropriate that such a garden should be dedicated here in Melbourne in the seat of the national Government for the first twenty-seven years of Federation and in the State of Victoria, the birthplace of such a large number of Australian Prime Ministers.

This simple ceremony will play a very valuable part and a very great sense of history. And, of course, for all of us here today, it has a special significance because of the placement of the memorial to that great Australian Prime Minister, the founder of my Party, Sir Robert Menzies and his marvellous wife and someone who was loved as dearly as we loved him, Dame Pattie. It is so very special to all of us that we have present his daughter, her daughter, her daughter-in-law and other members of their family because they gave so much to this country and it is a special part of the ceremony, a special part of the opening of the Garden, that we should dedicate the memorial to both of them.

This is an important occasion in the life of the city of Melbourne. It makes an important contribution to the history of Australia. I thank the Premier, again, for his initiative. I thank the people associated with the memorial and I thank all of you for your attendance here today.

Thank you very much.