



PRIME MINISTER

15 June 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
OFFICIAL OPENING OF WINE AUSTRALIA
DARLING HARBOUR, SYDNEY**

F&OE

Thank you very much Len, Peter, to honoured guests, Jeff Kennett, the Premier of Victoria - did you write Len's speech? Pat McNamara, the Deputy Premier of Victoria, Richard Face representing the NSW Government, my colleague, Senator David Brownhill, Senator Meg Lees representing the Australian Democrats, other parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a particular pleasure for me to be here today, the Australian Wine Industry in a sense is an easy industry for anybody in Australia to feel affectionate about. It's not just an industry in the traditional sense, of being a group of people that produce a great product, but it also makes an enduring contribution to the social family and community fabric of the Australian nation, so it's a special industry in that sense.

But the other reason why I'm particularly happy to be here today, is that the Australian Wine Industry is an example of one of those Australian industries that I admire most, and that is it's an industry that has succeeded and exceeded its own expectations without any real government assistance. In fact, if I knew the wine producers correctly over the last few years, so far from receiving government assistance, year in and year out they've really complained to me that they have had to surmount government obstacles and government orders.

And it is an industry that has demonstrated great entrepreneurial flair, it is an industry which in the last decade has transformed many of the expectations Australia has about a capacity to carve out new export markets. When you look at the history of the Australian Wine Industry, if you look at the tremendous increase in the volume of exports of Australian wine out of Australia, that is a remarkable story. But even more remarkable is when you analyse that overall story you see the astonishing achievement of the Australian Wine Industry's sales into Europe, the idea that ten years ago Australian wine would be blitzing many of the traditional wine producers of the world in areas of Europe was unthought of and certainly not to be expected. So over that

period of time the industry has certainly demonstrated an enormous capacity to be an aggressive innovative industry relying on its own resources, its own native talent and its own technology.

It is the great modern Australian version of "coals to Newcastle" to have the Australian Wine Industry demonstrating along with the traditional European wine producers some of the best technology in the industry to be found anywhere in the world.

It is also an industry that matches one of my other aspirations for the Australian economy - it's an industry which spawns a large number of small foreign based businesses. Many of those small family based businesses have grown into much larger businesses over the years. But if the economic future of this country really does rest upon the aggression and the entrepreneurial flair of small business, then the wine industry is a great example of that and gathered here today are many people who are really the heart and soul of the small and medium sized business future of Australia. Because that is where our hope really lies. And it is in having an economic environment where people can be encouraged without government assistance or government hand outs but hopefully without too much government hindrance either, to innovate to develop their own flair and to derive the benefits of it.

By bringing together this great wine expo, the industry deserves the gratitude of the government - not only the federal government but the governments of the various Australian states. This expo is a marvellous reminder of the great region of variation of the wine industry in Australia and that is one of its strengths - that there are different and special characteristics of every part of the Australian Wine Industry whether it's in New South Wales, in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria or indeed in any other part of the country.

It's an occasion I suppose for all of us to reflect upon our own, even those who aren't in the industry, our own brushes with the industry. I have to say that in public life you have many memorable lunches. I've had a few memorable lunches in Len Evans' former Bulletin Place establishment - until it ceased to be the memorable part of the Sydney social landscape that it was for so many years. But at probably one of the most memorable luncheons that I've had in my life was a very pleasant lunch with four or five people at a delightful home in the Adelaide Hills, where two of the guests were the greatest living Australian - Sir Donald Bradman and the late Max Schubert - and to have the opportunity to talk about their own experiences with those two great artists in disciplines and pursuits and recreations so far apart, it was a wonderful personal experience. The late Max Schubert was a great figure in the Australian Wine Industry and the contribution that he and so many other famous names in the industry have made to the development of this unique Australian product is something that all of us respect enormously.

Ladies and gentlemen, finally could I say how happy I am to be here, particularly at the invitation of Len Evans, who has given so much to the industry, who has been so much of the very vibrant, humorous, articulate voice and face of the Australian Wine Industry and who has really brought together those, not only the industry part of the industry but also the socialising human recreational side of it. I think it is a remarkable industry, I think what you have achieved deserves our praise and credit, the fact that you have had the vision and the foresight to bring this expo together that you will be unveiling a thirty-year plan where over the past few years the industry has seen the need to dramatically increase the laying of premium grapes - all of those things speak of an industry that's not only come a long way over the last ten years, but an industry that over the next twenty, thirty or forty years is going to become an even greater driving force in the expert performance of our country.

It is a great day for any Australian to walk around this exhibition, to reflect upon the great success of a great Australian industry. I have very great pleasure in declaring it open. I thank all of the participants in the industry for the great contribution they are making in the development of the Australian economy.

Thank you.