



PRIME MINISTER

26 June 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
LAUNCH OF THE BIG HART TRAINING MANUAL AND VIDEO
THE THEATRE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE**

E&OE

Well to Chris Miles, to Judi Moylan, to other Parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, and most particularly the young people who've just taken part in the presentation; can I thank you for asking me this morning to launch this material. I am very pleased indeed to be associated with a project that seeks to use the medium of the arts to engage young people in an exercise that allows them to express their views, their feelings and their emotions.

At the present time this country is engaged in a significant debate about issues that touch upon violence in our community. And I want to say to this gathering this morning that any project which has as its objective a reduction in violence, aggressive behaviour, and more importantly the causes of that violence in aggressive behaviour, is a project that ought to be commended by all shades of political opinion and all shades of community opinion in Australia.

This particular project has involved the Commonwealth Government, it has involved the local community and Burnie through the Burnie City Council, and I welcome the representatives of that council to this morning's gathering. And it of course has also involved a number of young people in the Burnie community. And to the extent that it has placed an emphasis on reducing tendencies to violence and violent expressions, to the extent that it preaches the value and the virtue of resolving differences of opinion and resolving conflict without resort to violence, it is something that we ought to encourage as strongly as we possibly can.

I want to make it very clear to all of you here this morning that all members of the Federal Government share the desire, I believe, of the great majority of the Australian community to do what we all can to reduce the incidence of violence in our community. It finds its expression in many ways; it occurs domestically, it occurs in other situations. In some respects, the debate that we are having about the possession of firearms in the Australian community is a debate about the tendency of this country to have accepted, over the years, a certain culture of violence which I believe the great majority of Australians want to turn around. One has to recognise that there are many people who are born into a violent or semi-violent culture and that is a matter of profound sadness and a matter of profound regret, and a reminder to those of us in the community who did not have that misfortune that there are some of our fellow Australians, most of them very young, who have suffered that. And we have an obligation as a community, whatever our political views and whatever our perspective on other issues, we have an obligation as a community to do all that we can to eradicate that.

And this has been a practical project which has sort to use the great medium of the arts to re-engage people who've felt a sense of separation and alienation from the rest of the community, and it is something in that sense to be very, very warmly commended.

In so many ways the arts are becoming a livelier more everyday part of life in Australia in a way that people would not have imagined a generation ago. And the use of the arts to reach people who've felt that nobody was reaching for them in the past is something that does deserve our support and our commendation. I know that on two occasions the *BIG hART* project has received certificates of commendation for the work it has done, and it is therefore, for that additional reason, deserving of our praise and support. I therefore have very great pleasure in launching the material, the video and the working booklets, the manuals.

I want, on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, to thank the young people from the Burnie district for their participation in the project and also their participation here this morning. I want to congratulate Chris Miles, as the local member, for the work that he's done, and to thank very especially, the representatives of the Burnie City Council who are here this morning, and others that have been involved in the project.

It is the kind of joint community endeavour involving federal governments, local governments and most importantly of all, people, in attacking a difficult social issue and one that has to be dealt with realistically with candour, but in a way that is sensitive and understanding towards the people who are most effected by it.

I have, therefore, great pleasure in launching the material and I wish the project continued success.

Thank you.