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PRIME MINISTER

14 August 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
ADDRESS TO OLYMPIC DINNER - SYDNEY**

E&OE.....

...to Frank Sartor, the Lord Mayor of Sydney; to Kim Beazley, the Leader of the Federal Opposition; and to John Coates our host for this evening.

It is, as John Coates said, very easy on an occasion such as tonight to be carried away with emotion, with hyperbole, and with the superlatives that are properly uttered when we honour undoubtedly one of the great collective sporting achievements in the history of our nation.

There are few things that bind Australians together more absolutely in a less ambiguous fashion and without regard to differences on other issues than our love of sport and our love of the achievement of Australian men and women in sporting endeavour. When we as a people examine ourselves and search for the national cement that binds Australians together, a very large component of that cement has undoubtedly got to be our sporting achievements. And the team that went to Atlanta, the team that at one stage during the recently concluded games, there was a tendency on the part of some to denigrate and to write off, it was a team that ultimately returned to its enormous credit in great triumph, and won the greatest ever victory of an Australian Olympic team since the modern Olympiad was inaugurated in 1896.

And it wasn't only the sheer sporting achievement that impressed so many Australians. I think the 1996 Olympic team demonstrated three qualities that all of us Australians like to believe are particular characteristics of our national make-up. The team demonstrated courage; the team demonstrated excellence and high skill and the team demonstrated

unassuming cheerfulness, and I think they are three great commodities that are characteristic of Australian endeavour and Australian achievement.

I want to say to all of the members of the team that your achievements and your successes gave enormous pride, enormous hope, enormous enthusiasm and an enormous sense of unity to your fellow Australians. I can't conceive of any part of this country that wasn't touched on that Saturday morning when the great fightback commenced, I can't think of any part of Australia that hasn't been warmed by the sheer breadth of the achievement of the 1996 Olympic team.

And I know, ladies and gentlemen that I speak for my parliamentary colleague Kim Beazley in saying to all of the members of the 1996 team, that you have done immense honour by Australia. You have brought great accolades upon this country and each and every member of the team deserves the high praise that will undoubtedly be heaped upon you over the weeks and months ahead, and on behalf of a very proud, a very grateful nation, can I say to all of you, thank you, we salute your performance, we honour your excellence, we are in awe of your capacity, and we look forward with great enthusiasm and great affection to the coming of the Olympic Games of Sydney in the Year 2000 at the commencement of the next millennium.

And can I finally say that those Games here in the great city of Sydney will be an occasion to honour the young men and women of the world as they once again do contest. It will be an occasion to demonstrate to the rest of the world the breadth of vision and the excellence of the Australian nation.

It will be an occasion to celebrate the sheer joy of being an Australian and it will be an occasion to demonstrate to the rest of the world the great pride that all of us have in living in the greatest country in the world.

Thank you very much.