



6

## **PRIME MINISTER**

6 December 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP  
ADDRESS AT ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL  
MELBOURNE**

E&OE

---

Thank you very much, Mr John Ralph; to Your Grace, Archbishop George Pell; to you deans, thank you for the very illuminating and informative guide and tour of inspection of the almost fully restored and renovated St Patrick's Cathedral. To Mr Ryan, the Chairman of the appeals committee and to all of those other very generous citizens of Melbourne and supporters of the appeal, can I say how impressed I am with the Cathedral. I don't think I've seen anywhere in the world a more magnificent stained glass window than that, certainly nowhere else in Australia, and I can understand the commitment and dedication of Melbourne's Catholic community but also the broader community to this project.

I am very happy this morning to announce that the Federal Government will contribute \$1 million towards the restoration appeal. I do believe very strongly that buildings such as St Patrick's Cathedral, they are of course primarily spiritual centres, and St Patrick has been at the centre of spiritual life for Catholics and for the Christian religion generally for almost a century since its consecration in 1897. It's also been a great cultural centre for Melbourne and very much part of this city for all the years that it has stood, but buildings such as St Patrick's are also part of Australia's heritage and as we come to celebrate the Centenary of Federation, it is important that we make provision in both the material marking of the Centenary of Federation and also the other ways in which we mark the history of Australia since Federation in 1901, we do make provision for the place of church buildings and the place of the Christian religion in the development of Australia.

I mean, for instance I have ensured that one of the Commonwealth members of the committee to celebrate the Centenary of Australia is Archbishop Peter Hollingworth the Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane and I do think preserving and restoring some of the richer of our cathedrals it is part of the heritage - not only the religious heritage but also part of the built and monumental heritage of Australia, and this really is a magnificent cathedral and it speaks volumes for the loving care and craftsmanship of the people that have been associated with its restoration, and I was touched when I spoke to Michael, the gentleman responsible for the restoration of that beautiful Archbishop's chair, and being here today of course is a reminder of the various tributaries to the Catholic tradition in Australia.

There is of course that very deep and strong Irish tributary which has played such a major part, not only in shaping and influencing the Catholic Church in Australia but also shaping and influencing the Australian way of life. There are few people in Australia who are not in some way touched by the very deep and rich Irish heritage of this country. And as the years went by I am reminded of the enormous contribution - the other great Catholic tributary - the people of Italy who have made a great contribution, an enormous contribution, particularly the post World War II story of Catholicism in Australia and also of Australia generally. And the people of Eastern Europe, from Poland of course, the birthplace of the present Pope and head of the world wide Catholic Church, a building like this is a reminder of the various tributaries to the Catholic experience and the Catholic faith in Australia and the contribution that it has made. So I am delighted to be here. I am delighted in a material way, as well as other ways, to associate the Federal Government with this magnificent restoration.

To you Your Grace, I wish you - only still fairly recently enthroned - your enthronement occurred about the same time as mine I think! I think it was separated by a couple of weeks. The process was a little different, and you will have a tenure of the office perhaps, I think it could, in the normal course of events be longer than mine, although I'll try hard to match it, but it is a delight to be your guest. I wish all of the parishioners of St Patrick's the very best of good fortune. I thank the Catholic community of Melbourne for the way in which they have contributed so richly to the life of this city and to the life of Australia and I hope in a small way this contribution helps the appeal and I hope you will see it as a symbol of the honour that the Australian community does to the Catholic Church and to the Catholic community for the contribution that it has made to our nation.

Thank you.