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PRIME MINISTER

21 June 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
ADDRESS AT THE WREATH LAYING CEREMONY
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIRFORCE REMEMBRANCE STONE
BATTERSEA PARK, LONDON**

E&OE.....

Counsellor Tina Thompson, the Mayor of the Borough of Wandsworth, to Sir Roger Carrick, the British High Commissioner in Australia, Mr Neal Blewitt, the Australian High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, to Major General Stan Eskell, Jill Dutchess of Hamilton, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like, first of all, to take the opportunity on behalf of the Australian Government to thank Lady Hamilton for her great efforts in organising the erection of this memorial in 1995. It is one of the few memorials in the United Kingdom specifically to commemorate the deaths of Australian service personnel in all the World Wars.

I know that it was the focal point of the commemoration of ANZAC Day here in Britain only a short while ago and that service attracted a very large number of people. It will become the focal point in the United Kingdom in future years for the commemoration of ANZAC Day and I do very warmly, on behalf of the Australian Government and all the other Australians here, thank you very very much for your special efforts and express our appreciation for your gesture.

The floral tribute that I have placed against the memorial this morning is not only in commemoration of the more than 5000 members of the Royal Australian Air Force who died in the defence of the liberties of Europe, not only in World War II but also in World War I, but in a broader sense it commemorates the enormous sacrifice of Australians in defence of freedom in the European theatres of World War I and World War II. By any measure, the contribution in terms of human sacrifice and the loss of young lives made by Australia in the defence of things that we value and treasure in

common, with other freedom loving people around the world, by any measure, that sacrifice was immense.

You only need to reflect for a moment on the fact that more than 46,000 Australian war dead lie buried in France. This memorial commemorates the more than 5,000 who died in the European theatres of air war and, of course, in Gallipoli the cemeteries care for the dead who died in the original ANZAC campaign.

So it is an occasion for Australians to reflect with sorrow but also in pride and humble gratitude of the sacrifice that so many of our country men and women have made defending the way of life which people in this part of the world enjoy to the full measure as we move towards the next millennium.

On behalf of the Government of Australia, and I know on behalf of all the Australian people, I do want to take this opportunity of recording our continued gratitude and thanks to all the men and women of Australia who paid the supreme sacrifice wherever they may have fallen and in whatever theatre of war they may have participated in defending what we hold dear and participating in the defence of the universal values of individual liberty and individual freedom. The contribution that they have made to the modern Australia will never be forgotten and the contribution that they have made collectively to the survival and freedom and the things that we hold dearest of all I hope will never be forgotten by those nations and those people with whom they fought so valiantly and in also in whose cause they so freely gave their lives and gave their all.

Thank you.