



Prime Minister

① copy

My you
agree, would
you please sign
to attached

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 January 1986

Dear Charles, letter ("My dear Prime Minister")
CDP 11;

Australian Bicentenary 1988 : HMG Gift

As you know from my letter of 20 May, it was agreed that the sum of £1 million should be made available from the FCO's provisions as the British Government's contribution to the Australian Bicentenary. The news was conveyed to the Australians in the Prime Minister's letter of 30 May to the Australian Prime Minister, which Mr Hawke acknowledged on 25 September.

FCO Ministers agreed that the major part of this sum should be set aside to provide Britain's official gift to Australia for the Bicentenary.

We have examined a number of proposals for an appropriate gift. We have concluded, on the basis of recommendations by the Britain-Australia Bicentennial Committee and in consultation with our High Commissioner in Australia, that the gift should be a purpose-built Sail Training Ship of modern advanced design, which could also serve as Britain's entry in the Tall Ships event with which the Australians propose to open their Bicentenary ceremonies.

I should be grateful if you would now seek the Prime Minister's approval for this choice of gift so that a formal announcement can be made. The idea was discussed informally with Mr Hawke in Canberra during the visit of Sir Peter Gadsden, Chairman of the Britain-Australia Bicentennial Committee, and Mr Hawke welcomed the idea.

It is proposed that the vessel should sail from Portsmouth in the summer of 1987, with a combined British and Australian crew of young people sponsored by interested communities in each country.

We have heard that the First Fleet Re-enactment Company may be proposing that the ship, if agreed as HMG's gift, should join their fleet leaving Portsmouth in May 1987. We are looking at this idea about which we have, at first sight, some reservations. But it does not affect the central recommendation. We shall prepare suitable briefing on this point if, as seems likely, the Prime Minister visits St Catherine's Dock on 26 January.

/The choice



The choice of a Sail Training Ship has a number of points in its favour. Being mobile it would avoid the difficulty of a fixed gift located in one particular State. It should demonstrate good British craftsmanship, and modern technology in the equipment it carries, and would provide much needed employment for British shipbuilders. It would benefit young people, and at the end of its training life it could be put as a permanent exhibit in the Sydney Maritime Museum. It is envisaged that the cost of the basic vessel would be met from official funds made available from FCO (DW) Vote; British firms would be invited to contribute additional equipment, and the Britain-Australia Bicentennial Committee will be responsible for raising any additional funding that might be needed.

As you may know, subject to the approval of both Houses, Parliament propose to present a Vice Régal Chair to the new Australian Parliament building in 1988, so there will already be a British gift in the capital city.

I enclose a draft letter from the Prime Minister to Mr Hawke announcing the gift of a Sail Training Ship. Once the Prime Minister has approved the text we propose to telegraph it to our High Commission in Canberra with the signed copy to follow. We propose that an inspired question in Parliament should closely follow the announcement to the Australians.

Yours ever

R N Culshaw

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

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*Hope it
will be for
Sydney design*

AUSTRALIA: Relations: Pt 2