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Prime Minister  
CDP  
24/1

HOUSE OF LORDS,  
SW1A 0PW  
24th January 1986



Dear Charles,

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AUSTRALIAN BICENTENARY:  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA CONSTITUTION ACT

I have received a copy of your letter of 3 January to Robert Culshaw.

The Prime Minister enquired, as a matter of interest, whether it would really matter if we held a good quality facsimile and let Commonwealth countries have the originals of such key documents where they have specifically asked for them.

The Lord Chancellor has considered the Prime Minister's question. He suggests that an original is, by definition, unique. It cannot be replaced even by a faithful reproduction from which it is virtually indistinguishable. It is a testimony to the power and efficacy of the original that both the Canadians and now the Australians have sought to obtain the authentic version of their respective Acts of Constitution.

The preservation of two copies of every Parliamentary Act reflects the unique relationship of Parliament to the Administration. Copies of the Acts have been lodged amongst the public records since the time of Edward I, two Centuries before Parliament's own systematic archives begin. They take their place today in a series which is one of the oldest in the Public Record Office. The integrity and validity of the records are maintained not only by preserving the individual items from loss or damage, but by applying the same principles to every constituent. To remove even one item from the permanent collection as defined by the Public Records Acts would be a significant breach of practice, and an indefensible precedent.

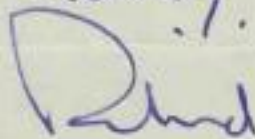
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The effect of such an action would spread beyond the public records to many other institutions which preserve records and objects in testimony to the history of the country. Their integrity would undoubtedly be a matter of public concern, but that concern would focus even more sharply upon the national archive itself.

A copy of this letter goes to Robert Culshaw, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Yours sincerely,



R C STOATE

GOBQUERON

LONDON



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

24 JANUARY 1986

The British official gift to Australia for the Bicentenary will be a specially commissioned sail training ship.

The ship will be sailed to Australia by a joint crew of young Britons and Australians to participate in the Tall Ships Event in 1988 and will then be handed over to Australia.

The British Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, has written offering the ship to Australia and I will be writing to thank her for the British Government's offer.

The ship is a significant gesture by the Government and people of the United Kingdom towards Australia's Bicentennial Year and is a most appropriate tribute to the longstanding relationship between Australia and the United Kingdom.

This gesture is one of many aspects of British participation in the events of 1988 in Australia, which were being co-ordinated by the Britain-Australia Bicentennial Committee.

The Government will give early consideration to how the gift can be utilised in support of its Priority One commitment to young Australians in the years ahead.

The British gift of a vessel will, over the years, offer many young Australians a unique opportunity for the personal development which sail training offers.