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**Title:**

Opening address at the Convention Planners Convention - Australian Mineral  
Foundation Auditorium

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OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER, DON DUNSTAN, AT THE CONVENTION PLANNERS  
CONVENTION - AUSTRALIAN MINERAL FOUNDATION AUDITORIUM. 28.7.75.

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Mr. Kennett, Parliamentary Colleagues, Mr. Deputy Lord Mayor, Ladies  
and Gentlemen :

I am particularly pleased to be here this morning because, in a sense,  
I take personal pride in South Australia's growing importance to the  
tourist industry and to that section of the industry concerned with  
conventions.

In 1970 when my Government made its first major initiatives in this area  
South Australia - it was asserted - did not rate in the Australian  
tourist stakes and certainly did not get a fair share of the National  
convention business.

It is, in fact, amazing what a change has occurred in those five short  
years. The blinkered local cynics who said the Adelaide region in  
particular was not suited to intensive tourist marketing can now be  
numbered among the visitors and locals who visit the tourist areas and  
use the wide variety of facilities the Government has either established  
itself, or assisted and encouraged.

Changes to the Licencing Act to allow a wider variety of drinking and  
restaurant services; conservation plans and historic restoration  
programmes; upgraded accommodation services in major tourist regions;  
the establishment of major theatres and auditoriums - have all  
contributed to the total picture. And with the addition of an expanded  
marketing programme the State, according to the most recent studies,  
has the highest net return from domestic tourism in Australia.

In 1971 it was, however, clear that a special effort needed to be made  
to get a proper share of the convention market.

As you would all know, conventions are big business. According to the  
World Bank, they are the fastest growing aspect of tourism. I think I  
can say now that already we have had tremendous success in promoting  
the State as one of Australia's major convention meeting places. This  
is largely due to the concerted efforts of industry and Government.

In 1971 I commented adversely on Adelaide's poor showing as a convention  
venue and called on the tourist industry to advance ways by which the  
city could be presented as a National convention centre.

I am glad to say that the industry responded to this call magnificently. It prepared a feasibility study which showed that if our aims were to be achieved, a convention bureau was required. The Government agreed with this proposition and the establishment of the joint Industry-Government venture was announced in July 1972.

Since then almost 300 conventions have been held here, bringing 150,000 delegates to South Australia. Last year 150 conventions were held, and the spending amounted to over a quarter of our total tourist income. The future is even more encouraging. Almost 100 conventions have already been booked between now and 1980 and we expect these to bring 50,000 delegates who will stay 120,000 visitor nights in the State. Five of these will be major international conventions of more than 1,000 delegates.

The following details will give a further indication of how successful the Bureau has been.

In the 1973-74 financial year, Adelaide was the venue for 120 conventions bringing in well over \$3M. In 1974-75 this figure rose to 142 conventions bringing in \$4.3M. Between 1976 and 1980 South Australia will be the venue for major national and international conventions of 1,000 people or more. These include the International Society for Education through Art Convention. (The Society's world headquarters will be in Adelaide between 1976 and 1978); the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science Convention; and the Australian Dental Congress and the Australian College of Surgeons Convention.

On the international scene we have adopted a deliberate policy of encouraging national conventions to invite international delegates, particularly from countries in the Pacific basin. Something like 10% of all national conventions meeting in Adelaide now have an international participation.

The decision of the International Society for Education through Art to meet here in 1978 is in this respect very satisfying. One thousand delegates from almost every country in the world will see what Adelaide has to offer. I am personally very pleased at this development, because I issued the original letter of invitation almost three years ago, and have very closely followed the negotiations.

But one should ask why do we want conventions for South Australia?

Well, the major reason is the economic benefit they bring to this State. Convention delegates are "Super Tourists" generating spending in the order of \$50 a day. They therefore provide an excellent tourist income with less impact on the environment than a greater number of tourists would have who would be generally spending less.

Convention delegates are major users of hotels, particularly in the off-season. They play an important part in off-setting the plague of seasonality which afflicts the accommodation industry.

Further, convention delegates demand high standards of facilities and services and they compare this with other cities in Australia, and with other countries. In this way they place us on our mettle. I am proud to say that our industry responds magnificently to this challenge.

However, the value of conventions is not to be judged on economic terms alone. They help to keep this State in the main stream of national and international development in many fields, and they bring here prominent men to stimulate our thinking and provide us with new ideas.

This is a very important spin-off from the International Society for Education through Art's decision to base its world headquarters in Adelaide from 1976 to 1978. It means that Adelaide will be in the forefront in this particular area, and is a further justification for the Government's policy of developing the arts in South Australia.

There are a number of reasons why Adelaide is attracting conventions of this calibre.

Firstly, it is a big city able to provide the facilities demanded by large conventions - and despite its size it is still compact enough to provide these services in a friendly and personal way.

Secondly, there is freedom of movement within the city. Most accommodation is only a 10 to 15 minute taxi trip from meeting places.

Thirdly, we have excellent convention venues such as the magnificent Festival Centre, which has three indoor auditoria able to seat 2,000, 600 and 380, and provides projection, audio-visual and multi-lingual translation equipment and bar and restaurant facilities.

And finally, many of the State's most popular tourist attractions, including the Barossa Valley, Fleurieu Peninsula and the Adelaide Hills are within easy driving distance. Other areas such as the Flinders Ranges, Kangaroo Island and the River Murray provide scope for post convention package tours.

So while you are here you are being given a taste of Adelaide (and, I trust, of the products of the Barossa and the Southern Vales). I hope you will enjoy it. Our city is large enough to provide all of the sophisticated facilities and services required by convention delegates yet small enough for us to recognise your presence here and for you and your members to see what we have to offer.

Accordingly, I extend to you a cordial invitation to return to South Australia. Next time I hope you will bring your associations and companies with you.

I have very great pleasure in declaring the Convention open.

Thank You.

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