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PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER THE HON P J KEATING, MP
LAUNCH OF ABC AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION INTERNATIONAL
GORE HILL, SYDNEY
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

This is an historic moment in our national life.

In the last few years Australians have heard a good deal about our need to go to Asia – to look to the Asia-Pacific, because that is where our great opportunity is. It is where our future lies.

In the past twelve months the countries of the region have heard about it too. They know that Australia is making the leap – that we are siezing the moment.

The argument is an economic one and a geographic one. The Asia-Pacific is the economic region closest to us. It operates within our time zone. It is the fastest growing part of the world.

We have not just the raw materials, but the skills and services, the educators, and increasingly the manufacturing, to become a dynamic partner in the region's growth.

Each month the success of our endeavours becomes more apparent. The Asia-Pacific and particularly South-East Asia, is the destination for more and more Australian exports. More and more Australian companies are finding markets in Asia.

And I might say, Asia is increasingly coming to Australia for goods and services – especially personal services.

I think it is true to say that even in the past twelve months our awareness of the Asian opportunity has dramatically expanded.

And in the same period, I know from my own travels, the countries of the region have become more aware of our changed approach, and our new determination to successfully do business.

The change is driven by a more fundamental change within Australia itself. This is a much more complex and subtle society than it was a generation ago. It is a richer society, more open and more worldly.

Australia's great achievement in the last generation has been the creation of a sophisticated modern multicultural society. A society remarkable for both its diversity and its tolerance. And this has made us stronger, more adaptable and creative.

We are now living through the second great change – the change which will secure our way of life and our standards of living for generations to come. That is the change to a modern manufacturing society, integrated with the most dynamic region in the world – our own region.

I suppose no theme has quite so dominated the rhetoric of the past few years as this one. But, in the last twelve months I have also had the opportunity to say from time to time that our success in manufacturing and trade necessarily involves Australia's identity.

We will do best if we are confident, if we leave no doubt about who we are. We should be projecting to the world the truth about Australia; this is a robust democracy, a society as rich and diverse and unique as the continent itself. A people able to imagine what they might be. Able to imagine their future in the region and the world. A creative people, able to make things the world wants to buy. Able to deliver the information and services which the world needs. Able to deliver the products of their imagination and culture.

That in essence, is the Australian identity in the 1990s – and that is what the ABC is now going to deliver.

As I said, this is an historic moment.

Great credit is due to Gareth Evans and Bob Collins. As good politicians and people of imagination must, they pushed and cajoled and relentlessly persuaded others to get this project through. I know they rank it high among their many achievements, and so they should.

Credit must also go to Bruce Donald and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for bringing the project to fruition.

From now on the people of our region will be able to know us better, and that will make all our other efforts that much easier.

Australian Television International will bring Australia and the South-East Asian region significantly closer.

Tonight I am very happy to announce a new initiative with a similar and complementary purpose.

The Commonwealth Government has decided to conduct a study of the feasibility of staging in Darwin a biennial festival of the region's indigenous arts and life sciences.

The festival would be created in conjunction with the Northern Territory community and private sector interests. Calling on the Territory's unique cultural strengths, location and facilities – including these new ATVI facilities – the festival has the potential to become one of the world's great cultural events.

As never before, it will provide a window onto the achievements and lifestyles – the genius, if you like – of the peoples of the Asia-Pacific.

This initiative is more than symbolic of Australia's desire to engage with the region; it is an example of how we can creatively engage.

So too, is the launch tonight of Australia Television International.

Once again, it is my duty and my pleasure to congratulate everyone involved and on behalf of the people of Australia, wish the venture every success.

Tonight we have taken another step along the road towards a closer relationship with the region, and in so doing, another step towards the new Australia.

SYDNEY

17 February 1993