



**VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN,
MR RYUTARO HASHIMOTO**

I have very great pleasure in announcing that the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Ryutaro Hashimoto, will visit Australia on 28-29 April. I look forward to reciprocating the hospitality Mr Hashimoto extended to me during my visit to Japan in September last year.

Mr Hashimoto's acceptance of my invitation reflects the importance we both attach to maintaining the closest possible cooperation between us and our two countries. Japan is a close friend of Australia's and a highly valued partner in regional and international affairs. Japan is Australia's most important export market.

It is fitting that Mr Hashimoto should visit Australia in the year that we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the Australia-Japan Commerce Agreement. This agreement opened the way for the development of a remarkable economic relationship and laid the foundation for the present diverse and warm relationship between our countries and peoples.

Mr Hashimoto's visit provides a welcome opportunity to discuss how we can best promote our economic and political partnership and our cooperation in regional affairs.

Mr Hashimoto will visit Canberra and Sydney.

17 April 1997