

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
MR E. G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P., ON HIS RETURN FROM CHINA AND JAPAN
5 NOVEMBER 1973

Within the next few days I shall be reporting to the Australian Parliament on the results of my visit to China and Japan. I believe this visit, in the company of several of my ministerial colleagues, was the most successful and productive overseas mission ever undertaken by an Australian Government delegation.

We have forged new understandings with two of our greatest neighbours - with Japan, our most important trading partner, and with China, the most populous nation in the world.

With both countries we have redefined our relationship to the benefit of both sides and set new perspectives that will endure for years to come.

Our basic task in Japan was not an easy one. Essentially it was to explain to the Japanese Government that in the development of our minerals and energy resources Australia in future will be the master in her own house. We will not allow the present proportion of foreign ownership and control of these resources to increase.

In Tokyo we made this position quite clear. The Japanese understood it. They accepted it. At the same time we reassured Japan that Australia would never deny Japan access to the raw materials she needs. We will remain a dependable supplier. That position, too, was understood and welcomed.

I did not go to Japan to carp or complain, as the Leader of the Opposition did, about Japan's defence spending, or internal policies. I did not go, as Mr Snedden did, to incite Japan to a resurgence of militarism. I went to seek new friendship and understanding.

The fruits of that understanding will be embodied in a lasting treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. For years the Japanese Government sought such a treaty with Australia. The previous Australian Government refused to conclude such a treaty. We have now cleared the way for negotiations on the Treaty of Nara to begin without delay.

As an example of the kind of cooperation that will flow from our better relationship, Senator Wriedt obtained most encouraging indications of Japan's willingness to make long-term arrangements for the purchase of our primary products, especially wool. I am confident that such arrangements will bring benefits to both countries.

My visit to China was the first ever made by an Australian Prime Minister. It brought great practical benefits to Australia as well as great personal satisfaction to me.

It marked the end of a generation of neurotic fears and lost opportunities. Australia has now established a firm and cordial friendship with a government representing a quarter of the earth's population. That friendship, I believe, will be lasting and fruitful.

As a result of my extraordinarily long and thorough discussions with Premier Chou En-lai, Chairman Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders, the Australian Government now has a much better knowledge of Chinese attitudes to a whole range of world problems. Such knowledge is essential to the conduct of a mature, confident and constructive Australian foreign policy.

We are no longer working in the dark. China knows what we think. We know what China thinks. On many issues - such as nuclear tests, the Middle East, Bangladesh and Korea - we frankly acknowledged and fully explained our differences.

On many practical issues we made great progress. Dr Patterson secured Chinese agreement to important long-term contracts for the sale of sugar to China. This arrangement may well prove to be the biggest commodity deal Australia has made with another country. It follows the highly valuable wheat contract with China concluded recently by Dr Cairns.

I believe we are now entering a more enlightened and productive era in our relations with China. I believe the great foundations of friendship and cooperation we have laid on this visit will stand for years to come.