

71  
Under embargo until 6.15 p.m.



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

15 APRIL 1977

### ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF NAURU HOUSE, MELBOURNE

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this evening, to share with you this very happy occasion. I should like to thank you, Mr President, and your predecessor, Mr Hammer De Roburt, for honouring me with your invitation to join you and our friends from the South Pacific at this ceremony.

This is in every sense an important and historic moment for Nauru. It marks the bringing to fruition of a major overseas investment project by Nauru and creates in Melbourne a most impressive symbol of that country. But Nauru House is more than just a symbol. It is an expression of Nauru's faith in the future. It is a tangible affirmation of the hopes and aspirations of the Nauruan people and of their determination to provide an assured future for their coming generations. It is a project in which all who have participated can feel a strong and well earned sense of pride.

Mr President, your Minister of Finance, Mr Kinza Clodumar, spoke recently in the Nauruan Parliament of Nauru House as symbolising both the unity and strength of the Nauruan people and the strengthening of the ties of friendship between our two countries. He stressed the Nauru Government's view that it was fitting and proper that this building should be erected in the City of Melbourne. I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed by your Minister. There is a special relationship between Nauru and Australia. It is a relationship based on long-standing close links of friendship and joint endeavour, a relationship which I am confident will long endure.

I am not simply speaking of contact at Government level. Our relationship is firmly underpinned by the many personal friendships which exist between Nauruans and Australians. The City of Melbourne occupies a special place in the hearts of Nauruans, a feeling which is reciprocated by the citizens of Melbourne.

This building, now the tallest in Melbourne, will provide a constant and highly visible reminder of those bonds of friendship. It is significant that with us this evening are the distinguished Heads of Government and other senior representatives of the member countries of the South Pacific Forum. As the regional political organisation, the Forum brings together all

the independent and self-governing states of the South Pacific.

The presence here this evening of our friends from all corners of the South Pacific testifies not only to the warmth and esteem in which Nauru is held by its Forum partners, but also to the strength of Forum solidarity.

Also with us are the Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission and the Director of the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation. Both these organisations, of which we are all members, are playing a crucial role in the progress and development of the region.

In the near future, several of the self-governing states of the South Pacific are to achieve independence, considerably swelling the ranks of South Pacific independent nations. Australia welcomes the gathering pace of constitutional change in the South Pacific.

The region is of high importance to Australia and we are determined to live up to our responsibilities towards the countries of the region. The South Pacific is rapidly becoming an increasingly important region of the world, and the major powers are showing a greater awareness of it. Similarly, the South Pacific nations are establishing links with countries outside the region and with such international organisations as the United Nations, its agencies and the European community.

This is to be welcomed, and highlights the need for regional cooperation in order to safeguard and to project South Pacific viewpoints and perceptions. The Australian Government will continue its efforts to sustain and extend its relations with the countries of the South Pacific, both bilaterally and through such regional organisations as the South Pacific Forum, the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation.

Nauru is an active members of these regional bodies. Through its activities in the organisations, and through its wide network of shipping and aviation services, it is playing a constructive role that far outweighs its size.

It is then, because of the close links which Nauru has with this city, and this country, that the opening of this striking building has a special significance. Australians and Melburnians in particular, are grateful for and honoured by the trust that Nauru and the Nauruan people have shown in us. I am especially pleased to welcome President Dowiyogo to Australia on this occasion.

It is appropriate that his first visit to Australia as President of the Republic of Nauru should be in connection with this visible expression of Nauruan enterprise and foresight.

I have great pleasure in declaring open Nauru House.