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PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF THEIR MAJESTIES
THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN
PARLIAMENT HOUSE - 16 JUNE 1988**

Your Majesties
Minister
Distinguished Guests

The Australian Government and people are honoured to welcome you to our country in our Bicentennial year.

This year we are celebrating 200 years of European settlement of this continent. But it is right that today we recall that the arrival of the First Fleet at Sydney Harbour in 1788 was only the final link in a long chain of events, stretching over centuries, by which Australia came to the attention of the nations of Europe.

Standing at the first point on that chain are the great navigators of Spain's Golden Age - men such as de Quiros and Torres who explored our region in the early 1600s and whose discoveries helped open the way for the Dutch, the French and the British who followed.

In 1606, it was de Quiros who, after five months at sea, made landfall in the islands of Vanuatu. He immediately claimed possession of all the lands as far south as the Pole, and he named them the Southern Land of the Holy Spirit.

Your Majesties, I am relieved to know that you have not come to Australia to revive the claim made by your intrepid countryman 382 years ago!

From the earliest days of the young colony of New South Wales, Spain and Spaniards exerted a direct and positive influence. For some years, the colonial currency was derived from Spanish coins of South American silver - the famous 'holey dollars'. And of course Australia's wool industry, which was and is one of our most important export earners, was derived from the merino flocks of Spain.

Perhaps Spain's most important early contribution to Australia was the inspiring role of the Benedictine Bishop Rosendo Salvado, who founded the New Norcia mission and monastery in Western Australia in the middle of the last century. He was among the first Europeans to live with Aboriginal people and to study their languages and cultures. His legacy was not only the magnificent monastery, with its important library for Australian studies, but the lesson of his compassionate and far-sighted attitude towards the Aboriginal people.

Spanish settlers have arrived in Australia throughout our history, but special mention should be made of the Basques and Catalans who from the turn of the century were important participants in the development of the Queensland sugar industry.

After the agony of the Spanish Civil War, Australia attracted many thousands of people from Spain seeking freedom and prosperity in a new home.

Australia welcomed these new settlers, and welcomes them still, as valued fellow citizens and as integral members of our multicultural society. Spanish Australians have contributed to the arts, to agriculture - including wine-making - to industry, and indeed across a wide spectrum of activities. They have enriched our society.

At the broader level, relations between Australia and Spain are very sound and friendly.

There is much ground for hope that our two countries, although physically distant from one another, can cooperate to our mutual benefit in promoting the many values that we share.

Trade is increasing steadily, as befits two economies which have complementary characteristics. We both realise the potential to increase it further. In this context I wish to extend a special welcome to the delegation of Spanish businessmen, headed by Mr Ligeró, who are in Australia in conjunction with your visit.

Spain has contributed generously to our Bicentennial celebrations this year. The visit of your tall ship, Juan Sebastian de Elcano, will long be remembered by Australians. Spain's participation in Expo 88 - including your own presence this week at the Spanish national day - has brought a new dimension to our mutual understanding.

Your Majesties,

I mentioned at the outset Spain's first Golden Age, the age of the great navigators and the Conquistadors. I believe today Spain is entering a new Golden Age, making a remarkable transition to stability, harmony and democracy after 40 years of civil war followed by dictatorship.

Your own role, Your Majesty, in fostering this transition and, in particular, in standing firmly on the side of democracy against those who sought to overthrow it, remains an inspiration to all of us.

Today, Spain has the fastest growing economy in Europe and has re-entered the mainstream of the world economy through the European Community. Spain will attain the Presidency of the Community next year. It is my hope that, under Spanish leadership, the Community will renew its efforts to pursue liberalised trade policies to the benefit, not only of countries such as Australia, but also ultimately to the benefit of the EC members themselves.

You have called for, and worked towards, a fairer international order, based on freedom and dignity for all mankind, for a new economic rationality which can promote the harmonious development of all nations, and for an active solidarity in reducing tensions leading to a true and just peace. In this you have the full support of Australia.

In 1992 the world will be celebrating one of the major achievements of your first Golden Age, the 500th Anniversary of the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus. 1992 will certainly be the year of Spain - the hallmark of the new Golden Age: Barcelona will be hosting the Olympics, and Seville will host Expo 92.

I am delighted to be able to announce today that Australia will be participating enthusiastically not only at Barcelona, but also at Seville.

I hope, Your Majesty, that the next few years will see continuing and increased contacts between our countries, contacts based on our very many bonds and shared interests. Your visit to Australia is a positive, significant, and most welcome step in this direction.
