



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF THE
PRIME MINISTER OF WESTERN SAMOA,
TOFILAU ETI ALESANA
CANBERRA - 30 AUGUST 1988**

Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana and Mrs Tofilau
Minister for Economic Affairs Tanuvasa Livi and Mrs Tanuvasa
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

Last year I had the pleasure of paying a visit to
Western Samoa to attend the meeting of the South Pacific
Forum.

Over the years the Forum has proven an invaluable sounding
board for Pacific leaders to discuss the many issues which
confront our region. Last year, meeting in the wake of the
tragic events in Fiji, the Forum had a particularly
important role to play and our meeting was a particularly
successful one.

It showed the constructive role which Western Samoa plays in
our region. It also gave me the opportunity to renew my
acquaintance with you, Prime Minister, and with other
distinguished Western Samoan leaders.

It is a particular pleasure to welcome you and Mrs Tofilau
and your party to Canberra today. This is your third
official visit to Australia in five years, Prime Minister.
We recall with pleasure your earlier visits to attend the
Forum meeting in Canberra in 1983 and your working visit in
1985.

Australia and Western Samoa enjoy a close and cooperative
relationship, both bilaterally and on regional issues. Our
two countries have maintained diplomatic relations since
Western Samoa achieved formal independence in 1962. We
maintain a friendly and productive dialogue on a wide
variety of issues ranging from trade to aid, and from
cultural cooperation to defence cooperation. And I might
say, Prime Minister, that Australians have developed a great
respect for rugby players from your country and we are
looking forward to the tour which the Western Samoan team
will make here next year.

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As well as in the Forum, we have worked closely together in the South Pacific Commission. Together with our regional neighbours we achieved an important regional objective with the Treaty of Rarotonga, which established the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. We have also worked to achieve the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and the Environment of the South Pacific region, and our work on the Law of the Sea and regional fisheries issues further shows how constructively we can work together.

Prime Minister,

Australia is this year celebrating the 200th anniversary of European settlement on this continent. We are celebrating the creation of a nation which is free, prosperous, independent and democratic - but we have also come to a clearer recognition of just how short those two centuries are in terms of the history of our own continent as well as in regional terms.

The culture of Australian Aboriginal and Islander people extends back over more than 40,000 years, and I believe non-Aboriginal Australians are increasingly coming to recognise and to appreciate the richness of that culture.

In regional terms, sophisticated and prosperous Pacific Island societies were in existence long before they were discovered by the Europeans.

A thriving Samoan society, a proud sense of Samoan identity and a rich and unique Samoan cultural tradition, have existed for many centuries.

The struggle to preserve or regain independence from foreign domination has been a recurring theme in Samoan history. It is therefore no surprise that when in 1962 Western Samoa achieved independence it was the first Pacific Island country in this century to do so.

So today, Prime Minister, I pay tribute to the long history of the Samoan people and to their considerable achievements in building an independent and free nation.

In our Bicentennial year, we are grateful for the generous involvement of our friends from overseas in many Bicentennial events, in particular at the World Expo 88 in Brisbane which you will be visiting shortly.

One of the very memorable features of Expo is the combined South Pacific village, lagoon and entertainment area to which Western Samoa has contributed.

At the 5th Festival of Pacific Arts in Townsville where Western Samoan men and women performed traditional songs and dances we were given another insight into your rich culture.

Through its involvement in these events, Western Samoa has, with justifiable pride, given many thousands of Australians the rare and important chance to experience and to understand the culture of the South Pacific. We are grateful to you for that.

Prime Minister,

Our two Governments share a common vision of a Pacific region that is peaceful, politically stable and firmly on the road of economic and social development for the benefit of all its peoples.

Our region is currently in the process of far-reaching change - perhaps of a magnitude which will exceed the impact of European culture and technology in the last century.

We cannot foresee the full impact on our region of current economic, social, cultural and technological developments - nor can we predict the political consequences of such change.

But Western Samoa demonstrates how successfully traditional Pacific societies can achieve economic development, while preserving the central values and elements of their culture.

That is a very significant lesson to us all.

Prime Minister,

I again welcome you to Australia. Your presence reminds us of the diversity of our Pacific region, and of the substantial history and achievements of our Pacific neighbours. I am confident the cooperative, Pacific partnership that has evolved between Western Samoa and Australia will prosper to the mutual advantage of our peoples.
