



PRIME MINISTER

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**PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH
PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON FOR THE KING OF TONGA
KING TAUFA'ABAU TUPOU IV
CANBERRA - THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 1988**

Your Majesty,
Your Royal Highness,
Distinguished guests,

I am very pleased to welcome Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness to Australia in this, our Bicentennial Year. In this visit, we see the continuation of a personal and family connection with Australia which goes back fifty years and which will continue for many more.

This is a time of great change in the Pacific. It is difficult to foresee the impact on our region of current economic, social, cultural and technological developments. But it is a time which demands cooperation between the nations of the Pacific.

For many years now Australia and Tonga have shared a relationship which demonstrates that independence and constructive cooperation can go hand in hand.

As members of the Commonwealth and of the South Pacific Forum, our nations have striven together for the betterment of our people and of our region.

We are now looking for ways to expand our cooperation.

One way that this could be achieved is through the media. I know, for example, that Tonga's radio station transmits news bulletins from Radio Australia. When Tonga introduces domestic television, I should like to think that we may be able to share visual news and current affairs programs.

There is also great value in regular working contact between our leaders and representatives. The visit to Tonga by the members of our joint committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in June showed how beneficial such contact can be.

Our Parliamentary Representatives would have had the opportunity to see for themselves the unique blend of Polynesian tradition and Parliamentary Government which you have developed in Tonga. We respect the independence

displayed in pursuit of your regional and international objectives. We also congratulate your Government on the stability and confidence it has maintained in the evolving Pacific arena.

And may I offer you my personal congratulations Your Majesty, on your recent 70th birthday. We heard in Australia about the spectacular success of the Royal Birthday Ball.

On a practical level, there are close and constructive links between Tonga and Australia in day-to-day life. There is a Tongan community of some 6,000 in Australia today. Each year some 50 Tongan students study in Australian universities and colleges on official scholarships.

Your Majesty, our nations also share a keen interest in sport. You have done a great deal yourself to nurture sport in Tonga.

Australians have watched with enthusiasm over the past two years as Tongan oarsmen have swept across the Pacific, taking trophy after trophy. I recall the excitement in Apia in May 1987, when the Tongan canoe achieved a very popular and impressive victory. I understand that you may be enlisting Australian expertise in the quest for an even faster craft. I think that this is an excellent opportunity for a friendly exchange of information and skills.

You will be aware of the continuing Australian interest in the developing Tongan tourist industry. From your visits to some of our resorts in Queensland, you will have had the opportunity to see the possibility of joint ventures.

I would like to thank Your Majesty for Tonga's participation both at Expo and in Townsville, where I saw your impressive display at the Pacific Arts Festival. I am sure you will enjoy Expo when you visit it on Tonga's National Day.

Later this month, Your Majesty, I am very much looking forward to visiting Nuku'Alofa for the meeting of the South Pacific Forum. This will be an important meeting and your hosting of it is a further sign of Tonga's shouldering of its regional responsibilities.

Your Majesty,

I thank you for doing us the honour of visiting Australia. Your visit has been most valuable in helping to cement the strong, stable and constructive relationship between our nations.
