



## PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
LUNCH FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
CANBERRA - 23 NOVEMBER 1988**

Mr President,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Australia in this, our Bicentennial year.

I welcome you especially in the name of many hundreds of thousands of Australians who are of Greek origin, and who have made an invaluable contribution to the development of this country in our first two hundred years.

Australia is a distinctively multicultural nation, one that takes great pride in the fact that so many people from vastly different countries and cultures have chosen to make their homes here. We have been enriched immeasurably by the contributions of our diverse population and this year in particular we pay tribute to our diversity and to the strength which we, as a society, have derived from it.

Mr President,

I welcome you to an Australia in which all Australians are encouraged, within the limits of our laws and institutions, to take pride in the ethnic origins and history with which they identify.

The right to maintain and develop one's culture, language and religion - and, just as importantly, the responsibility to accept the rights of others to do the same - lies at the very heart of multicultural philosophy.

Multiculturalism offers each of us the opportunity to have our traditions accepted, and our viewpoints heard: it asks each of us to accept that others have equal rights.

Greek Australians have made an outstanding contribution to the development of our varied and vibrant multicultural society. They have combined pride in their Greek past with an overriding commitment to the future of Australia.

The Greek Australian community has made its impact in a number of fields: the arts; the media; the law; sport; all levels of primary production and business, including fishing and ship building; and politics - in particular, I am pleased to say, through the Australian Labor Party.

But it is not only individuals of Greek descent who have made a contribution to this country. Greek community organisations such as the Greek Orthodox Church and local Greek associations and welfare bodies are respected and influential organisations that have done much to improve the quality of life in this country.

One very public manifestation of Greek-Australian culture is the various festivals held in the capital cities of Australia.

In Melbourne, the annual Antipodes Festival, which I try to attend whenever I can, brings together the Greek Australian community in a celebration that draws tens of thousands of participants. There would be few greater sights in Melbourne than Lonsdale Street on the opening night of the Festival.

Mr President,

I have had the pleasure of working closely with Greek Australians throughout my public career. My own electorate of Wills has a large Greek community with whom I maintain close contact. It is because of this familiarity that I can say with conviction that the Greek community holds a special place in Australia and in the hearts of all Australians.

Outstanding features of the Greek Australian community are its commitment to hard work, to the principles of freedom and democracy, to strong family ties, to educating the younger generation and to caring for the elderly. Greek-Australians have played a central role in creating the competitive, fair and forward looking society which is Australia today.

Mr President,

Australians came to admire these values during World War II, when our two peoples fought side by side on Greek soil. The heroism shown by your people in assisting Australian troops who, in their turn were helping the Greek nation, will never be forgotten. The Australian-Hellenic War Memorial unveiled earlier this year by Mr Haralambopoulos will serve as a continuing reminder of that heroism.

Australians also came to admire the struggle of the Greek people to assert democratic values during the dark years between 1967 and 1974. We know too, Mr President, the personal price that you paid during that struggle in defence of those great values.

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The people to people link between our two countries continues to be close.

Along with thousands of Australians who have made the pilgrimage to Greece to see the roots of Western civilisation and to experience the warmth of Greek hospitality, Hazel and I remember with great pleasure our visit to Greece in 1986.

Mr President,

The common commitment of Greece and Australia to a peaceful, less threatening future has seen our two Governments working closely together on important international issues such as nuclear weapons disarmament.

Although our two peoples share much in common, our primary interests are in developments in our own regions. But on these matters too, we can offer each other much support.

We know that the Greek nation continues to be troubled by the fourteen year old division of Cyprus, and by the problems that flow from this. Australia has consistently supported moves to achieve the restoration of an independent, united, sovereign, non-aligned Cyprus. We hope that the talks between Mr Vassiliou and Mr Denktash, on which they are about to report to the United Nation's Secretary General, will be fruitful.

Australia also recognises that the future of Greece lies in its membership of the European Community, of which it is currently President. As you know, we enjoy close links with the European Community. Already the European Community, taken as a whole, ranks as Australia's second largest export market and as our largest source of imports.

The development by 1992 of a single European market with 320 million inhabitants - a market larger than any other in the industrialised world - will have a strong impact on global economic and trading relationships.

Australia is concerned that any such impact be a positive one. It would not be helpful if 1992 was to give birth to an inward looking economic bloc. We also look to further progress being made in winding back inefficient agricultural subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy.

If Europe is to continue to be a potent, dynamic economic force into the future, it must maintain an open economy after 1992. Strength comes from competition, it does not arise from introspection and retreat.

Mr President,

Australia is this year celebrating two hundred years of European settlement.

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Your visit in this important year, and the visits by many other world leaders, have added much to our celebrations.

Special thanks should go to the Greek Australian Bicentennial Committee for planning and co-ordinating Greece's generous role in our Bicentenary.

The Greek Pavilion at World Expo 88 in Brisbane and the participation of your naval training ship 'Aris' in our Bicentennial Naval Salute, were particularly welcome.

Of course, the highlight of your country's involvement will be the exhibition of Macedonian antiquities which you will open tomorrow.

The exhibition - the largest of its kind ever to leave Greece - spans 4,000 years from Neolithic times to the Roman Conquest in 197 BC.

Included in the exhibition is the priceless gold myrtle wreath from the Tomb of King Philip II - one of the richest treasures of antiquity. I am sure that this exhibition will delight and instruct thousands of Australians - scholars, students and the general public.

Mr President,

As part of your visit to Australia, you will be journeying to Melbourne, which we proudly claim as the largest Greek-speaking city outside Greece itself.

I can assure you Greek-Australian friendship will survive the rivalries which will undoubtedly develop between Athens and Melbourne over the hosting of the 1996 Olympic Games. Whichever city hosts those Games, there will certainly be a proud Greek community, celebrating the seminal role of the Greek people in fostering the Games of both the ancient and modern Olympiads.

Mr President,

On behalf of all Australians, and not least our proud community of Greek-Australians, may I welcome you to Australia and wish you a happy and memorable visit.

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