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## PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGO UNTIL 6 PM

FOR MEDIA

7 JANUARY 1989

I have today sent the following message to His Excellency Mr Noboru Takeshita, Prime Minister of Japan:

"At this time of great sadness for the Japanese nation, I wish to extend to you personally, and through you to the people of Japan, the sympathy of the Government and people of Australia.

The long Showa era which has now drawn to a close has seen the transformation of Japan into a major economic power with increasing influence in world affairs. The Emperor, symbol and focus of the nation, played a crucial role as Japan emerged from the ashes of war to establish itself as a force for stability in our region.

Throughout his long life the Emperor was held in the highest esteem by his people. Now, as Japan enters a period of mourning and prepares for a new age, our thoughts are with you. I would especially ask that my condolences be passed to members of the Imperial family."