



**PRIME MINISTER**

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON FOR THE  
PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA  
THE HON EDWARD FENECH-ADAMI  
CANBERRA - 15 AUGUST 1990

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Prime Minister and Mrs Fenech-Adami,  
Dr Galea and Mrs Galea,  
Distinguished guests,  
Parliamentary colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen

Earlier this year I travelled to Turkey with sixty World War I veterans to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli.

For Australians, the heroic achievements and the selfless sacrifice of the ANZACs in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign are immortal. For a young nation - full of reckless valour and comradeship - Gallipoli was a bloody initiation into the world arena.

It is a little known fact that serving beside Australian troops at Gallipoli, and sharing their sacrifices, were volunteers from Malta. The barges which brought the diggers to Anzac Cove were Maltese built. Once on shore, our soldiers were sustained by supplies provided, in part, from Malta. And not least in importance for twenty thousand Australian troops wounded at Gallipoli and elsewhere during World War I, Malta, 'the Nurse of the Mediterranean', was a safe haven of rest and healing.

The bravery of the Maltese people during the privations and terror of World War Two is also renowned - not least by the Australian troops who served there or who visited there in transit to the Aegean and North Africa.

All these efforts mean the Maltese people deserve, and hold, a special place in the hearts of Australians. Such bonds, forged in wartime, have been strengthened in peace. And you will excuse me, I am sure, if I give one uplifting demonstration of that statement.

In 1946, a young Maltese girl began tending the graves in Malta of Australian airmen killed in the Second World War. Moved by the sacrifice of the Australians, she also began organising wreath-laying ceremonies, single-handedly honouring the ANZAC spirit. For forty four years, Margot Bonello has continued in these quiet endeavours, not for profit or gain, but in simple recognition of the dignity of life. Earlier this year, Margot Bonello's work was recognised formally by the Australian people when she was made an honorary Member of the Order of Australia. Her story symbolises, poignantly and eloquently, the links of history and of friendship which bind Australia and Malta so closely together.

Physically, of course, Australia and Malta are distant and dissimilar countries.

Malta, in the heart of the Mediterranean, would fit some 200 times into our state of Tasmania. The size of your island nation has inhibited your growth, while the vastness of our island continent has created different problems and opportunities. Natural resources have been our way of life for decades, while your people are remarkable for their achievements in a land without rivers, lakes or forests.

What ties Australia and Malta together is not proximity or similarity, but the links of kinship and history that Margot Bonello symbolises - links which your visit, Mr Prime Minister, will broaden and strengthen further.

Your visit, of course, is only the most recent episode in a long tradition of movement of people between Malta and Australia.

It is a tradition that dates back to the earliest days of European settlement of Australia. Our common heritage as British colonial outposts has studied our history with many bright figures - such as Count Bologna Strickland - later Lord Strickland - born in Valletta in 1861, appointed Chief Secretary of Malta and then, in the first two decades of this century, Governor of Tasmania, Governor of Western Australia, and Governor of New South Wales, before returning to Malta where he became Prime Minister.

Not the least of his achievements while he was in Australia was as a vocal and effective advocate of Maltese emigration to Australia. The steady growth of the Maltese community in Australia was such that in 1931 my predecessor as Prime Minister, Jim Scullin, attended Maltese National Day celebrations in Melbourne.

Melbourne today has more Maltese residents than can be found in any city in Malta. Indeed, from the Mt Lyell copper mines on Tasmania's west coast, to the sugarcane fields of Northern Queensland, Maltese people have settled every corner of this country - and they have done so, in particular, since World War Two. They have accepted the challenge that a new life brings and, through vigour and persistence, carved out new and productive lives as proud and committed Australians.

You begin to realise just how substantial that contribution has been when everyday Australian names reveal their Maltese ancestry.

Darren Gauci - the "Golden Hands" of horseracing - one of Australia's premier jockeys.

Jeff Fenech - the triple world champion boxer - a working class kid from Marrickville who has become one of our best known sporting heroes by taking on the best fighters the world could offer and beating them all.

Joe Camilleri - a well known singer-songwriter.

Mario Fenech - the captain of the South Sydney Rugby League Club and a fierce competitor on the field.

Through the Catholic Church many Maltese Australians have made valuable contributions to the social advancement of the Maltese community here and to the broader Australian society.

And I am particularly pleased to record that the trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party have repeatedly benefited from the dedication and commitment of many members of the Maltese Australian community.

So I pay unstinting tribute on this occasion to the commitment and the great contribution made to Australia by its Maltese community. We are proud of them and you too, Mr Prime Minister, have reason to be proud of them.

Of course, such achievements come as no surprise. The courage and determination which has characterised Malta in war and in peace are evident still in her Australian children.

It is evident too in the way the modern Malta is taking a role in international issues which concern us all. The active and constructive role you are playing in international environmental issues attracts our congratulations and admiration.

The discussion that you initiated at the United Nations on global climate change has led to close attention being given to the issue through forums such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Your foresight will, I am sure, lead to increased collaboration between us as we meet the environmental challenges that the coming years will bring.

At the same time the Commonwealth will remain important for us both as a major forum for us to exchange views.

Malta has also played a memorable supporting role in the dramatic evolution of closer relations between the two superpowers that we have witnessed in recent years. The first talks between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev took place at sea off Malta - though I recall that your weather almost succeeded in consigning the two leaders to the same fate as that other, earlier, distinguished visitor to Malta - St Paul, shipwrecked in AD60.

Mr Prime Minister,

At this time we are seeing many momentous events: tyranny replaced by popular rule, suspicion replaced by trust, the accumulation of weapons replaced by disarmament, and international discord replaced by dialogue. Notwithstanding our concern at current developments in the Gulf, these developments give us great hope for the future.

Malta and Australia have not stood idly by during these dramatic transformations, but have played our parts, and continue to do so, in the interests of creating a more peaceful and prosperous world. In applauding that, and in celebrating the enduring people-to-people links between our two countries, let me say that you are a very welcome visitor among us. On behalf of all Australians I wish you a productive visit and a safe journey home.

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