



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LIAISON
GROUP'S 1991 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROGRAM
CANBERRA - 11 FEBRUARY 1991**

Bill Ferris
Ian Spicer
Leader of the Opposition,
Parliamentary Colleagues

At this challenging time in the life of our nation, it is heartening indeed to see this new initiative of the Australian business community - an initiative that demonstrates once more our capacity, as Australians, to work together for the common good.

Australia's ability to become competitive in the increasingly complex world of trade, investment and finance is critically important to our hopes for a stronger and more prosperous nation.

And the launch today of the International Business Program is an imaginative and timely contribution to this process of nation building.

The core aims of the International Business Program are:

- . the development of a stronger and more effective Australian dialogue on the issue of competitiveness, and
- . the creation of an effective presence of Australian trade and industry within the international business community.

These are goals the Australian Government endorses wholeheartedly.

All of the organisations involved in this venture have, in years past, made their own contributions to the process of building the Australian economy and its export trade.

And there must be considerable, and legitimate, pride that these eight national business associations along with AUSTRADE and the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce, have now joined forces to create a year long program dedicated to promoting Australian competitiveness.

Each Association represented in this program has its own viewpoint and objectives. But such differences have been put aside for the common purpose of promoting the interests of the national economy.

It is in this shared endeavour that I see the enduring significance of the International Business Program. And let me add how appropriate I feel it is that this approach is matched with the bipartisanship being displayed on this occasion.

This reflects the fundamental confidence of both sides of politics in the capacity of Australians to achieve our goal of a more competitive and more prosperous Australia.

My Government has long recognised the need for Australian industry to increase its international competitiveness and to accept the challenges and opportunities that will flow from enmeshing our economy into the regional and global economy. And we have acted on that need.

Tariff reductions and ambitious microeconomic reforms are evidence of this Government's commitment to improving the efficiency and performance of the Australian economy.

At a different level, I might also add how pleased I have been to assist Australian businesses find and develop overseas markets for their products. One of the features of the official overseas visits I make as Prime Minister has been the participation of delegations of business leaders, which has included their involvement in direct talks with foreign Governments. I think all those who have been involved would agree that this has been a successful innovation, which has shown just how seriously Australia regards the challenge of exporting, and how closely business and government can work to meet the challenge.

But the task is, as we all know, a substantial one, and much remains to be done. In my statement to the Parliament on March 12 I will take stock of our progress and outline the Government's strategy for the further medium and long-term economic development of Australia.

As for this program we are launching today, it would be unfair and unwise to expect immediate or spectacular results.

---But I do believe, from the wholehearted support that is being put into it from all sectors of the productive economy - primary, secondary and tertiary - and from Government itself, that it will, at the very least, be another step along the road to success, which will complement the other policy initiatives we are taking and the other positive efforts being made throughout the Australian community.

The creation of the International Business Program confirms the synergy between business and Government in this country, and it represents an opportunity to position ourselves to make the best international use of our national resources.

So I congratulate all those connected with the International Business Program and I express my confident hopes for your full and successful program throughout 1991.

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