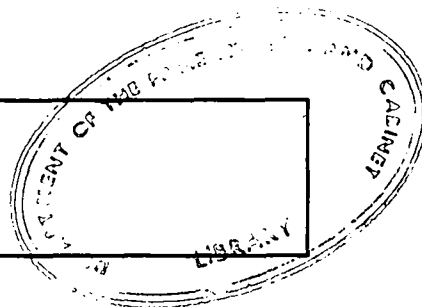




PRIME MINISTER



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**SPEECH FOR THE PRIME MINISTER
OPENING OF NOMURA COURT
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY
CANBERRA - 27 MARCH 1991**

This function marks a very significant date in the development of the Australian National Gallery: the opening of Nomura Court, the permanent home for the Gallery's magnificent collection of Asian art.

Nomura Court has been made possible by a generous donation to the ANG Foundation by Nomura Securities Company Ltd, one of the world's leading investment banks.

I want to express, on behalf of the Australian National Gallery, the Australian Government and the Australian people, our collective and heartfelt gratitude for this superb gift by Nomura.

In particular I want to thank the President of Nomura Securities, Mr Tabuchi, who has travelled from Japan to be here for this opening, for his generous support and encouragement for this venture.

It needs to be emphasised that the gift by Nomura is the largest single donation ever made to the ANG - and the only donation to be made for a construction project.

As a result of this unprecedented generosity, Australians will for the first time be able adequately to appreciate the Gallery's Asian art collection - a collection that has been assembled over a number of years, and which is still growing, but which has so far either been in storage or dispersed in displays elsewhere in the Gallery.

With this consolidated and coherent display area, an exciting future lies ahead for Asian art at the ANG.

Nomura Court, and the collection it now holds, demonstrate in a tangible way Australia's growing involvement in the Asia-Pacific region, our increasing enmeshment in the dynamic economies of the region, and our determination to

strengthen the links between, and our understanding of, the peoples and cultures of the region.

The ANG itself is working to establish closer links of co-operation and exchange with other national cultural institutions in the region.

At the same time, Nomura Court testifies to the depth and strength of the relationship between Australia and Japan, reflecting the close and enduring links between our two countries and the confidence with which we look forward to the future as constructive partners and friends.

Australia's relationship with Japan has long been underscored by the strength of our trade and commercial ties. Japan is by far Australia's largest trading partner, taking over 25% of our exports.

But our relationship is a much richer and more diverse one than this. Australia and Japan are becoming closer as countries because Australians and Japanese are becoming closer as people.

In 1990 more visitors came to Australia from Japan than from any other country - and by the year 2000 it is estimated that a million and a half Japanese visitors will come each year to Australia.

So it is very heartening, and very proper, that we should see here in the Australian National Gallery this proof of the deep and diverse friendship between Australia and Japan.

In every respect this new gallery accords with the ANG's goal of providing greater access for all Australians to a world class national collection, and to do so on the basis of secure and broad based financial support.

The Federal Government, of course, has been the major financial supporter of the ANG from its earliest days - well before the opening of this building in 1982 - to its operation today as a nationally and internationally renowned art institution.

We will continue to play our part in the ANG's future.

At the same time there is an ever-present need for the private sector to play a role in supporting our national cultural institutions, including the ANG, for the benefit of the whole community.

The Nomura donation is a magnificent example of the kind of support which the private sector can provide - and as art prices and other costs rise, this sponsorship will become even more necessary.

Let me in closing congratulate everyone involved in the Nomura Court project here at the Gallery; the professional

work of the entire ANG staff, led by Betty Churcher, is readily apparent tonight.

In particular, let me pay tribute to the Council of the ANG, and not least to its former Chairman, Gough Whitlam, whose long-held desire, and long-sustained efforts, on behalf of this project are today brought to a triumphant conclusion.

It now gives me much pleasure to declare Nomura Court open.

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