



## PRIME MINISTER

### TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOVIET UNION

Australia has decided to recognise as independent states the eleven co-founders of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

I know that the recent momentous events in the former Soviet Union are cause for great celebration for many Australian community groups as cherished dreams are, at last, realised. Their excitement and joy is shared by all Australians.

I warmly welcome the new community of nations to the international stage. The cooperation between the newly independent states and the peaceful and orderly transition to the new Commonwealth is to be commended. This harmonious beginning augurs well for the future of the Commonwealth and its relations with the international community.

This new revolution would not have taken place without Mikhail Gorbachev. His role in the history of the late twentieth century has been decisive and he will undoubtedly be seen as one of the great figures of modern times.

The people of Eastern Europe were the first to benefit from Mr Gorbachev's reforms and to experience freedom. Now the people of the former Soviet Union are also charting their own social, cultural and political course.

Mr Gorbachev's foresight and courage also greatly contributed to the world becoming a safer place for everyone. The arms control agreements negotiated under his presidency will greatly reduce nuclear arsenals in both east and west. As a result, a spirit of goodwill and trust now prevails around the globe and the hands of the doomsday clock have been put back. I applaud Mr Gorbachev for his role in this transformation.

I wish the leaders and people of the members of the new Commonwealth well in the tasks ahead as they welcome this historic new year.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Evans, will issue a statement on the arrangements for Australian recognition.

Canberra

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