



**PRIME MINISTER**

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP**

**FAREWELL RECEPTION FOR PROFESSOR SLATYER  
26 AUGUST 1992**

Professor and Mrs Slatyer, Ministerial Colleagues,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for joining Annita and myself tonight, to  
farewell Ralph Slatyer and afford him the recognition he  
deserves as he steps down from the position of Chief  
Scientist.

I might say that for one so used to being among  
practitioners of the dismal science, it's a pleasure to  
be among exponents of the real thing.

In fact I've spent a decade attempting to push Australia  
in the direction of innovation, manufacturing, creating -  
making things. Using our brains.

It's always seemed to me that in the end this is the best  
measure of how far we have come. How civilised we are.

Both in his role as Chairman of ASTEC from 1982-1987 and  
then as Chief Scientist since 1989, Ralph Slatyer has  
been a pivotal figure in providing advice on science and  
technology matters to the Government.

There have been enormous changes in this period.

Industrial R&D in Australia has had one of the fastest  
rates of growth of all OECD countries, and attitudes in  
the business community to technology and innovation are  
changing rapidly.

The universities are now increasingly involved with the  
employers of their students and the users of their  
science and technology.

The Government research agencies have developed strong  
links with industry and other users of their research.

There is a new spirit of cooperation between researchers,  
and with research users.

Ralph Slatyer has been a key player in all of this.

I might say that the Government itself has been extremely active.

The recently released White Paper on Science and Technology, called Developing Australian Ideas: A Blueprint for the 1990s, is evidence of our commitment to the crucial role which science and technology can and must play in shaping the future of Australia.

Our belief in this was further emphasised by the decision in the Budget to make the 150 per cent tax concession for research and development a permanent feature of the tax system.

So too, the establishment of the Cooperative Research Centres Program testifies to the Government's determination to strengthen our science and technology system and capture its benefits in Australia.

Ralph Slatyer, of course, was involved in the creation of this program.

He has also established the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council and guided it successfully through the early years to become a major national forum.

All of his work has been characterised by imagination, professionalism - and pragmatism. He has a flair for creating mechanisms that work in practice.

At the same time Ralph has made important philosophical contributions to our thinking on the roles of public and private institutions in building a technologically innovative and internationally-oriented Australia.

He has been a capable leader and coordinator.

He has been, first and foremost, an Australian determined to help his country build its place in the world.

For over twenty years he has given exemplary service to Australian governments of different political persuasions.

At the national level he has also been a leader in developing environmental policy and in formulating practical programs for ecologically sustainable development.

He has managed the not inconsiderable feat of gaining the respect of both the conservation movement and the major resource based industries.

At the international level, he was President of two important intergovernmental environmental programs where Australia has been influential in determining their character and effectiveness.

He was also President of the International Council of Scientific Unions, as well as being involved in one of its important non-governmental environmental programs.

To do all this in addition to his full time and part time commitments in Australia, both to the Government and to the Australian National University, is remarkable.

Not surprisingly, Ralph has high standing in the science and technology community. His research career led to his election at an early age to the Australian Academy of Science, and then to the Royal Society of London and the United States National Academy of Sciences.

He is one of a very small number of scientists who have been elected to both these famous national academies.

In closing let me just say that I have mentioned only some of the highlights of Ralph Slatyer's distinguished career and its outstanding value to the government. I know there is much more to be told.

Ralph, your work has brought great credit to yourself, to the institutions with which you have been associated, and to your country.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Australia I congratulate and thank you - and extend to you and June every best wish for the future.