



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRIME MINISTER MIYAZAWA
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, 30 APRIL 1993

(PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY. EMBARGO : 8.30 PM)

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you,
Prime Minister, to Australia.

I understand this is your fourth visit to our country.

We offer an especially warm welcome on this occasion
because you are the first head of government to visit
Australia since the March election.

This is fitting given the very close ties that have
developed between our two countries.

The Australia-Japan relationship is longstanding and
mature.

It is based fundamentally on strong trade and economic
relations which serve our two countries very well.

But these days the Australia-Japan relationship goes well
beyond our economic links, important though they are.

By any standards, the quality of cooperation that has now
been achieved between our governments in regional and
international affairs is remarkable.

And the range of people-to-people contacts which flourish
between Australia and Japan attests to a high degree of
mutual interest and friendship.

All this is the more striking considering the different
racial, social, religious and cultural backgrounds of the
two countries.

Prime Minister, I appreciated very much the warm
hospitality I received from you and your Government
during my visit to Japan last September.

I am delighted that so soon afterwards I have an opportunity to receive you here in Canberra.

Though your visit has been short, I hope you have been able to learn at first hand today something of our current priorities and preoccupations.

Australia has achieved important progress over the past decade in making our economy more internationally oriented, more open, more competitive, and better able to take advantage of the economic dynamism of East Asia.

But there is still more to do in this regard.

Last week I announced our goal of making our labour market more flexible, by switching to a national system of enterprise bargaining.

And this will help us to become more competitive, more able to take our place in the region.

On that point, the Government is determined to encourage Australia's closer integration with the region.

Australians know this is where our geography is and where our concentration must be - and that we need to outfit ourselves properly to participate.

On that score, there is also wide support among the Australian public for us to define our national identity more clearly and more confidently.

Earlier this week I announced the appointment of an advisory committee which will examine options for making Australia a republic without altering our existing parliamentary system or Commonwealth-State arrangements.

I personally believe Australia will become a republic by the centenary of our federation in 2001.

This, as I say, will help Australia's relations with the region by demonstrating that we are standing on our own feet both practically and psychologically.

Prime Minister, I was pleased that today we were able to carry forward the very productive dialogue we started last September on regional and international affairs.

As we address a very fluid outlook in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia and Japan share many important interests and perspectives.

Neither of us belongs to a trading bloc, and we each depend vitally on the maintenance of an open and non-discriminatory trading system.

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Both of us have important security and economic relationships with the United States and we both strongly support the long-term engagement of the United States in the Western Pacific.

I listened today carefully to your account of your recent meeting with President Clinton and the outlook for Japan-US trade relations.

As a friend of both Japan and the United States, Australia respects the difficulty and complexity of some of the issues that you are now grappling with in the Japan-US economic relationship.

We have been heartened by your assurance today that Japan will not engage in managed trade with the United States.

This is an important assurance.

The outlook for the international trade environment is uncertain and troubled.

We have to do all we can to remove that uncertainty.

In that sense, it is imperative that political leadership be applied by all the main players to restore momentum towards a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

Similarly, within the Asia-Pacific region, we face a decisive testing period for the APEC forum.

To demonstrate the usefulness of APEC as a force for trade liberalisation and facilitation, it is important to achieve concrete results at the Seattle ministerial meeting in November.

As I explained in a speech on 8 February, I believe we should seek as our goal an integrated market which includes Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, North America, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the ASEAN countries - a market of 2 billion people producing half the world's output, bound together with harmonised trade rules, harmonised investment rules, harmonised standards and certification, and an agreed way of settling disputes between members.

As we move along the path towards this goal, there may come a point where we decide to use the APEC acronym to stand for both the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation process as well as the Asia-Pacific Economic Community.

To succeed, such a community must be founded on respect for the cultural diversity of the Asia-Pacific region and the different levels of development of member economies.

Our own experience, the Australia-Japan bilateral experience, demonstrates that cultural differences are no

barrier to successful cooperation provided it is based on shared interests.

As Australia and Japan have found, successful cooperation leads to trust and mutual confidence.

Because of our shared interests and perspectives, Australia and Japan are well placed to work together in promoting the concept of an Asia-Pacific Economic Community based on principles of openness, non-discrimination and practical cooperation.

This is an important way in which we can use the strength of the Australia-Japan partnership to promote open regionalism in the Asia-Pacific.

Prime Minister, let me conclude by saying how much I have valued your visit and our discussions today, and again how pleased I am to see you in Australia.

I now invite the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Hewson, to join me in welcoming you and your delegation.