



PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
CENOTAPH CEREMONY
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His Excellency, the President of Nauru, the honourable Speaker of the Nauruan Parliament, members of the Nauruan Cabinet, other distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen.

I understand my visit is the first to Nauru by an Australian Prime Minister.

I think it is therefore very fitting that President Dowiyogo and I should take a moment from the Forum schedule to take part in today's ceremony here at the Cenotaph.

The Cenotaph honours the courage and sacrifice of Nauruans and Australians who suffered during the Japanese occupation of Nauru.

It is important that we never forget the great tragedy experienced by the Nauruan people at that time.

The community was divided by mass exile. Unspeakable hardship and brutality meant that many Nauruans died. Indeed, a large part of the population died.

Exceptional qualities are needed for a community to survive adversity such as this.

A generation of Nauruan leadership was forged in that bitter struggle.

Their loyalty to their community remains an inspiration for all Nauruans today.

As an Australian I am also proud to honour the bravery and dedication of Colonel Chalmers and his four colleagues who died here in the occupation. Their names are fixed at the Cenotaph commemoration of the fact that they stayed after the evacuation with the Nauruan people and died as a consequence.

Our two countries have a long association, and it is associations of this kind where we share an experience in war. Where we die at the hands of an enemy, but die together. We know these things form part now of not just a long association but a long friendship.

We know each other now as friends and partners.

In recalling together today our shared history, we should draw faith from the courage and dedication of past generations of Nauruans and Australians. People who faced hardship and struggle, and in the Second World War, of course, brutality on a scale none of us today are asked to bear.

We should of the consequence of all this commit ourselves to long-standing friendship and cooperation in the future.

I am very happy that earlier today, President Dowiyogo and I agreed on a compact of settlement which will define a new phase in the Australia-Nauru relationship.

This is a relationship which I think is now underwritten by a treaty of principles, statement of principles, which I might say exists between Australia and no other country as it now does between Australia and Nauru.

Never before have we written down the basis of an ongoing friendship together as we have today.

So from here on we know well that we can build a future on a shared past, we know ours is a unique relationship, one which I am sure will endure.

I am very honoured to have had the opportunity to visit Nauru, and particularly honoured to take place in today's ceremony, where as Prime Minister of Australia this is the first opportunity for me in the position of Prime Minister to honour the Australians who died here, and to honour the Nauruans who died also. And to bring to our memory the great losses and shared sacrifices of the Second World War.

Our long history together is worthy of remembrance and now we can celebrate a future together, one based on mutual trust and mutual respect, and one where we know well together where our future will lead us.

Thank you very much for having me here today as part of this very moving ceremony.

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