



PRIME MINISTER

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

**LUNCHEON IN HONOUR THE HIS EXCELLENCY DR VON WEIZSAECKER,
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, 6 SEPTEMBER 1993**

On behalf of the Government and people of Australia, I extend to you and your party the warmest welcome to Australia.

Might I say that as one who rarely goes through a day - indeed would find it difficult to get through a day - without listening to Beethoven or Brahms or Richard Strauss, I am in almost constant touch with your homeland.

But, of course, Australia's links with your country go well beyond the legacy of music which Germany has left the world.

Nearly a quarter of a million Australians have German ancestry and their contribution to our industry and culture has been profound.

To take the most obvious and tangible example, the wine before you is purely Australian, but the Australian wine industry was fundamentally the creation of German settlers in the nineteenth century.

German emigrants were there on the frontiers of Australia's development almost from the beginning - in exploration, in agriculture, industry and intellectual life; and in the post war period they have continued to play a prominent role in building modern multicultural Australia.

The bonds of friendship between us are made so much stronger because these historical and cultural links are strong.

Mr President, let me say that your reputation precedes you.

As we Australians consider the future of our own constitutional arrangements, it is of more than casual interest to us to observe how effectively you have used the office of head of state to promote an enlightened view of Germany's international role in the changed circumstances your country is now experiencing.

And, Mr President, we regard with great admiration your appeals for tolerance and civility in addressing new social challenges in the reunified Germany.

Through you we extend our greetings to 80 million Germans re-united in freedom after four decades of division.

In doing so we know we greet a friend, a partner, a people with whom we have more than a little in common and who face challenges similar to our own.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century we are both confronted with a world of increasing complexity and dynamic, sometimes bewildering, change.

The hopes engendered by the sudden end to the Cold War have been dashed in many cases - the post Cold War era sometimes seems bleaker than we ever could have imagined.

Developments in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have necessarily been a major preoccupation of the German government, and Germany has done a great deal to assist countries in these regions towards democracy and economic efficiency.

In Australia we admire Germany's constructive engagement in these problems.

In this fluid post Cold War environment Australia has also focussed its attention on regional dialogue and an emerging sense of regional common interest and identity.

We have promoted the establishment of the APEC process which builds on the growing linkages and immense dynamism of the Asia-Pacific economies.

With a world economy struggling to emerge from recession, we desperately need the contribution that a fair and open multilateral trading system can make to sustained global growth.

Germany is in a powerful position to advance the cause of such a system. Your country's influence in Europe is crucial to a successful outcome of the Uruguay Round.

You will be aware that, particularly through the Cairns Group, Australia has done all it can to bring the Round to a positive conclusion.

Mr President, for many years Germany has played a constructive role in disarmament and non-proliferation, on the environment, and on international development.

We value your willingness to help keep the international peace; including in Cambodia, which for nearly 20 years stood out as the focal point of suffering and instability in South-East Asia, rather as Yugoslavia tragically does today in South-East Europe.

We know that the development of a more engaged international role for Germany is no easy task. We know it is complicated by frequently conflicting expectations abroad. It must be disconcerting to be at once criticised for exercising too much power and too little.

For our part, we regard the Federal Republic as a good international citizen and we welcome your commitment to assuming all the responsibilities associated with being a member of the UN and a major player within the international community.

We also welcome the fact, Mr President, that Germany continues to look beyond Europe. We are pleased that the German government and business community are seeking to cooperate with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

Your visit underlines this interest.

Just as we see scope for enhanced direct business cooperation between Australia and Germany, so we will be seeking opportunities for joint ventures in the region.

The presence of senior Germany business representatives at a major trade and investment conference in Melbourne in November we hope will lead to practical developments of this kind.

Mr President, far from diminishing our ties with Europe, we believe that Australia's increasingly strong links with Asia will make us a more attractive partner for European business, politics and culture.

We do not forget our long-standing links with you; nor do we fail to recognise the opportunities which exist for us in both the mature markets of Western Europe and the evolving markets in Eastern Europe.

Germany is a perfect example of a valued European trading partner - both an important market and an important source of investment.

In 1992 Germany was Australia's eighth-largest trading partner with total two-way trade of \$4.3 billion; and there is \$6.4 billion in German capital stock invested here.

Although we will remain a competitive and reliable supplier of raw materials to German industry, we also have, I believe, much to offer as a partner in manufacturing - and there is perhaps no better example of this than the construction of the ANZAC ships which I understand you saw last week at Williamstown in Victoria.

New areas for cooperation are emerging.

Our two countries recently signed a memorandum of understanding on environmental cooperation. Australian firms are engaged in restoring the environment of the new Eastern states of Germany.

Australia is to be the partner country at the 1995 Cebit Information Technology Fair in Hanover.

In the same year, the Australia Abroad Council is planning to hold a major promotion in Germany, the focus of which is likely to be Art and New Technologies.

And we have big plans to convert more and more Germans to the pleasures of drinking Australian wine and eating Australian food.

Despite our differing regional focus, our relationship is strong and full of potential. Certainly the prospects are extremely bright for our companies to work together with yours in our nearby markets, whether they be in the Asia-Pacific or in Eastern Europe, Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

Mr President, of course our success in the future will depend in a large part on the extent and the quality of the contact between our two peoples. If we bring to our relationship some of the spirit and imagination, the energy and ideas which the early German settlers brought to Australia, we are very likely to succeed.

The legendary German explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, wrote back to Germany in 1842:

Few come here to stay. But many change their minds when they have come to discern the attractions of this rich country, and to find its disadvantages less irksome. Families of this kind - he said - who are taking an interest in the colony, and who have come to look upon it as their own country, constitute, in fact, its only real wealth. And it is through them that a powerful state will gradually arise, a state which may possibly consign old Europe to oblivion.

One does not have to believe the last part to see the truth in the first. For it is true that Australia's success is built on the faith of those who, abandoning the old world, made this new world country unequivocally their home.

And it is also true, Mr President, that 19th century settlers and late 20th century tourists and business people alike, have come to Australia and found that the attractions far out-weighed the disadvantages.

We hope there will be many more such people, Mr President, and that you will in future, number yourself among them. That you will leave Australia assured of the friendship and good-will which exists between us. And that you will come again.

I now invite the Leader of the Opposition to join me in welcoming the President.