



## **PRIME MINISTER**

### **SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP LUNCH IN HONOUR OF PRIME MINISTER GOH OF SINGAPORE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, 13 SEPTEMBER 1994**

Prime Minister Goh and Madam Goh, it's a great pleasure to welcome you both to Australia.

And let me say at the outset how much I personally value the very close working relationship that I have enjoyed with you, Prime Minister, since my visit to Singapore in September 1992.

I also welcome our other distinguished guests from Singapore for what is indeed a propitious visit.

You are visiting at a time when relations between Australia and Singapore have never been better.

We have strong historical links, shared economic and trade interests, an excellent defence relationship and, perhaps most important of all, a similar vision for the future.

I see Singapore and Australia as two very forward-looking and optimistic nations with many reasons for moving forward together, in partnership.

One of the reasons for my confidence lies in our shared history which stretches back to before World War Two when Australia's first overseas representation in Asia was established in Singapore.

I think it's important to remember that our friendship is an old friendship that predates the birth of modern Singapore.

The content of the relationship has changed, but its closeness hasn't.

Just on fifty years ago, Australia participated in the defence of Singapore.

Today, the defence links still lie at the heart of the relationship, but they're much more geared to the future.

This morning, Prime Minister Goh and I discussed the excellent - in some ways remarkable - progress our defence relationship has made over the past few years.

We announced a number of important new areas of defence cooperation.

And later this year in November, our Ministers will open the Royal Singapore Air Force flying school at Pearce in Western Australia.

But, as critical as these defence links are, they are only part of the picture - for ours is indeed a broadly based relationship.

More than 6,000 Singaporeans are studying in Australia today while others who come here to holiday have made Singapore our fifth largest tourist market.

Singapore is our most important investment partner in ASEAN.

Singapore is our most important trading partner in ASEAN.

With two-way trade at more than \$5 billion a year, Singapore is our fifth largest export market worldwide and our eight largest trading partner overall.

And what is important about this trade, from an Australian perspective at least, is that a great deal of our exports are high value added manufactures and services.

In fact, Singapore is our third largest export market for sophisticated manufactures and a growing market for our services.

But we each want to do better.

And as we look to the future, we look to joint opportunities in third markets.

We share an understanding that strategic alliances can be critical to winning contracts in the world's fastest growing region.

This is the thinking that lay behind the Strategic Linkages Initiative which we launched during my visit to Singapore in 1992.

By combining the respective strengths of Australian and Singaporean companies, we are better placed to take advantage of major business opportunities in the region.

Today, I'm pleased to say we have moved this initiative into an important new phase with the decision to focus our collaboration on infrastructure projects.

And here we're looking at a potential market in the order of hundreds of billions of dollars.

In the five years to 1997, infrastructure spending in East Asia is estimated to exceed \$730 billion.

While we are searching out joint opportunities in third countries, our wider regional interests are also converging.

In this regard, Prime Minister Goh and I share a similar vision for the Asia Pacific region.

It is a vision of optimism and abundance.

And APEC is part of that vision.

We are both looking forward to supporting President Soeharto in bringing about an historic outcome at the APEC Leaders Meeting in Bogor in November.

Clearly, there have been enormous changes in our region over the past decade, but I suspect they are nothing compared with what is to come.

In the run up to a new century, I think it is critical that optimists - be they individuals or nations - form partnerships.

I say this because it is optimists who can imagine a better future.

And it is optimists who are thereby more likely to create that future.

Obviously, the best optimists are also pragmatists - they are the ones who bring about positive change.

In this regard, I think Singapore and Australia have much in common.

Both our countries have undergone enormous and positive change in recent times.

And, in this regard, it's vital that we guard against the sort of familiarity that prevents us from clearly seeing how much both our countries have changed.

You represent, Prime Minister, a country that is one of Asia's pre-eminent success stories.

Singapore has achieved remarkable economic growth accompanied by a real social concern for its people - for good housing, for education and training, for high standards of health care.

Singapore will continue to make a vital contribution to the region.

Prime Minister, I'm sure that during your visit here to Australia you will see how much Australia has changed - how we have transformed our economy into one of the most open and competitive in the world, how we have refocussed our attention to the Asia Pacific region.

I believe our two countries share a real optimism for the region and our respective roles in it.

For my part, I want to see Australia make its contribution wherever it can in partnership with Singapore.

I wish you all well for what I hope is a very enjoyable and constructive visit to Australia.

Thank you.