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PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
ADDRESS TO ROCKINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL, PERTH, WA
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I'm always delighted to speak to young people - particularly at schools - but young people in Australia anywhere, because you often wonder what a Prime Minister does. Well let me tell you what this Prime Minister does most of the time, most of the things I am doing are about you, because I have tremendous faith and great excitement about young Australians. I believe in them - I believe in you. And I know if we give you the opportunities, you will make this a more interesting and exciting country than the rest of us have made it. So, the greatest thing we can do for you is to give you the chance to show what you can do for the rest of us - and that means instilling in you a faith in this country, a belief that you have a unique opportunity, and the enthusiasm to go out and do things that when I was old as you I could only have dreamt about. In this country we have - I think - a unique opportunity, because there is one thing unique about us - we are the only people in the world that have a continent to ourselves. And given the pressures of population, and the problems of ethnicity, the conflicts and the problems we have seen over the years, to have a continent to yourself gives you a chance as a nation to fashion a life and a future that few peoples have ever had. And we're not just about that continent, and how we develop it - with all the opportunities to have a focus and a conscientious about the environment which gives us a style of living perhaps in the future unique among nations. But also, because we're a society with a well-developed set of values - we should be putting a marker in the sand to say that in this continent of ours, we will be unique, and that we will create a unique social democracy.

Now, you may say "well what does a unique social democracy mean?" What it means is that we will relate to one another, and have values about one another, that will lift the quality of this society above most other comparable societies. That is, we will reject the notion of a dog-eat-dog society, that the strongest take the best and the Devil takes the hind-most, and that we will - together - go forward as a society not with an underclass or sub-groups, but as one group. In other words, we have a loyalty to Australia, to the notion of what it has become, and a loyalty to one another. And through that strength we go on.

and now with the ASEAN regional forum we are starting to look in strategic terms at the region. Australia is becoming much more a supplier of defence material, both in the maritime area with destroyers and frigates and submarines and as well as that we are working on some quite revolutionary other products such as over-the-horizon radar and we are also looking at some of the guided weapons as well.

So, Australia is going to be a more significant force in the defence equipment area and, I think, this has now been recognised in south-east Asia and what better way of demonstrating it than to have you here being involved with us. So, I am absolutely delighted that you are here and that things are working well and I know how well this transition is taking place and how well you feel about it.

So, I look forward to this becoming a bigger and better thing between us and these first tentative steps in your new facilities being here, we can sit back a bit and watch it grow and see these exercises together and see what we can do in the future. Defence relationships are always a tremendous friendship building thing because if the defence forces of various countries feel confident and relaxed with one another it just means that the whole background environment is better and so for that reason and no other, I am glad this is working. But, I appreciated being shown over the FA18s. To be buzzing around in one of those for most of the week probably beats the hell out of being Prime Minister - I don't know - although there is always somebody wanting my job - you can never shake them off.

But be that as it may, could I again, thank you very much for the hospitality, for coming to meet me, I have enjoyed having a chat to you. I'll talk to a few more of you before I leave and I couldn't think of a nicer way to end a West Australian visit than to come here. Thank you very much indeed.

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