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PRIME MINISTER

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PM: Principally, I am going to the opening of the exhibition - the CeBIT Fair - because Australia is the guest country, in Germany, because this is the largest electronics and...it's the largest communications and electronics fair in the world. We have got 150 companies exhibiting - 150 to 200 companies. Ten years ago we would have had maybe 2 or 3 companies only being able to be in this. I think this is a demonstration of the new Australia - it's the way the world is going, and we are not being left behind. We are up there with the best of them, amongst the toughest competition, the most concentrated Fair of the new age - the electronic and computer age - we are up there this week, and we are the host country, the guest country. So, that is why I am going - in a sense to promote Australia, but also to celebrate our achievements, and to see that we are in the mainstream of these technologies.

J: What are you trying to achieve at the World Summit for Social Development then?

PM: To put Australia's view, to record the fact that we have put together a social democracy here - I think second to none around the world - a country with high employment and a good social wage, where equity and egalitarianism are important milestones in economic and social policy. They are things worth saying in this context.

J: What do you hope to achieve through your talks with Helmut Kohl?

PM: Germany is the third largest country in the world, it is a very big trader with Australia, we have got substantial two-way investment - I think we would like to improve that. Germany united is a much larger country - it has now got probably an even greater destiny in Eastern Europe as

well as Western Europe, and it's simply an important relationship to keep going.

J: It used to be our fourth largest trading partner, and now it's ninth - that's slipped over the last five years....

PM: It depends on how much we have grown, and how much other countries have come in, but I think the point is that Germany is now focussing to the Asia-Pacific again - after the reunification they are really getting their gaze on the Asia-Pacific, and I think a lot of companies think that Australia can be the platform where they launch themselves in the Asia-Pacific. And, of course, we agree with that.

J: Just on another matter - should Fred Many have been released from gaol?

PM: That's a matter for the New South Wales government - it is not my affair. Can I just make this point, though - let us record that this week a great milestone in Australian social history was agreed, and that was the Aboriginal Land Fund Bill. Because of the to-ing and fro-ing, it's now as if it's coming and going, hardly to be noticed. But let's understand, that because this Government decided that there will be justice for Aboriginal people, and there will be land for them - which is central to the way they live - the passage of the Land Fund was a great victory for Aboriginal people, and a great victory for the Government. It's a pity that John Howard, and the Coalition, couldn't have seen their way clear to agree to the original Bill, and know that stain is on them, and though they have tried to wash it away - it remains. But, the happy part is that justice was done, and the Aboriginal people will now have their fund.

J: In the sense that it will ease some pressure off Mr Howard, are you disappointed to be leaving the country at this time?

PM: No - look, Mr Howard...I have got him on simmer. And when I come back to him, he will be just - I'm sure - warming along nicely.

ends.