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PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF FRANJO TUDJMAN, PRESIDENT OF CROATIA
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 20 JUNE 1995**

It is a great pleasure to welcome you here to Australia.

This first visit by a Croatian head of state is obviously a significant event. It is a cause for celebration among Australians of Croatian descent, who have contributed so much to Australia in the past, and who are now especially well-placed to help build a new and more substantial relationship with Croatia.

Croatian-Australians have played an important part in Australia's history.

Since the Ballarat gold rush of 1854, more than 100,000 Croatian-Australians have contributed their labour, skills and innovation to Australia's economic and social development.

Croatian immigrants and their families have helped to open up rural Australia and to develop our resource and agricultural industries. Croatians became miners in New South Wales, cane cutters in Queensland, farmers and market gardeners in Western Australia and other states.

Croatian fishermen from the Croatian Littoral and Dalmatia helped found the Australia fishing industry.

Today in South Australia, a significant portion of the industry is run and owned by immigrants from Croatia. The best-known fisherman among them is Dean Lukin, the weightlifting champion who won a gold medal for Australia at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Croatian grape growers and wine makers, who first arrived here late last century from Dalmatia, helped found the Australian wine industry. Today that industry is worth over \$1 billion in exports annually.

This year a Croatian-Australian, John Kosovich, received an award in the Order of Australia, for his contribution to the Australian wine industry.

Croatian labourers and tradesmen, who came to Australia from the displaced persons camps of post-World War Two Europe, battled the isolation and hardship of the logging camps, mines, rural construction teams and the Snowy Mountains Electricity Scheme. They helped to build the modern Australia.

Here in Canberra, the work of Croatian-Australian workers and craftsmen is all around us, including in this Parliament House.

The entire marble work in the National Library of Australia was erected by Croatian stonemasons from the island of Brac.

And the Embassy which you will be opening tomorrow, Mr President, is a very tangible sign of this contribution.

Along the way, Croatian-Australians have introduced their love of soccer, through players such as this year's player of the year, Mark Viduka.

And a number of Croatians are leading players in our own football code, Australian Rules.

Croatian Australians have also been prominent in the arts.

Earlier this year I visited Berlin, where I was very proud to attend a performance of Wagner's opera, Tristan and Isolde, conducted by a rising Australian musician of international stature, Simone Young. Simone has a Croatian family background.

So the skill and talents of Croatian Australians have contributed in important ways to the modern Australia you are visiting, Mr President.

The commitment shown by communities like the Croatian-Australians to preserve cultural diversity *and* respect it, helps foster Australia's sense of nationhood.

Croatian-Australians have applied their skills and culture for Australia's benefit. And they have done this, as Australians must, with their loyalty first to Australia.

One issue concerns all Australians about the countries emerging from the former Yugoslavia: the appalling loss of life and suffering taking place there.

Many Australians have been touched by it, not least because this country is home to several hundred thousand immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, and to their descendants.

We understand the pain the conflict causes citizens of the Croatian-Australian community and other communities with links with parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Despite the suffering and the horrors which have been deeply felt here, it has been a tribute to Australians of Croatian, Serb and other former Yugoslav descent that they have not allowed the pressures and tensions of this appalling conflict to spill over into their own country.

We share in Croatia's happiness in becoming independent.

That was not achieved easily. And as we ourselves know, making changes to old practices and habits of mind, introducing economic policy changes and building a prosperous and just multicultural society is not easy.

Independence carries with it responsibilities as well as rights and powers. It must deliver security in the broadest sense to all the people of the country: peace, prosperity, respect for the equality and dignity of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, religion or language.

The standing of Croatia and the former republics of Yugoslavia, and the legacies of their leaders, will ultimately be judged by the success of democracy within their countries, and the contribution they make to building peace and stability in their immediate region through cooperation with their neighbours.

I am sure all those present here - and all Australians - join me in wishing you well in contributing to these objectives and in our hope that you can use your position to build peace in the former Yugoslavia.

You have arrived at a time when Australia is enjoying the results of fundamental changes in our foreign, trade, economic and social policies. I hope you will find much that Croatia and its business people will want to associate with.

Today, Australia is one of the fastest growing of all the industrialised economies and forecast to remain so throughout this year.

We are a major trading nation, increasingly looking to take an active role in the Asia-Pacific region, which now accounts for half of the world GDP.

Already three-quarters of our exports go to this region, over 30 percent of them manufactured exports.

I believe these developments in Australia and our region are significant for Croatia as well. Australia is a good place from which to do business in the Asia-Pacific region.

As the world's 13th largest economy, with a sophisticated research capacity and a deep resource base, Australia has much to offer European countries such as Croatia. And the Croatian-Australian community is well placed to contribute to the development of trade between us.

I am sure all Australians will join me in wishing you and your country well in your endeavours to secure a peaceful, cooperative and prosperous place in the international community.

Finally, let me assure you that we look forward to building on the many personal connections which exist between our two countries to create a more vital and substantial relationship with Croatia.

I wish you and Mrs Tadjman well for your visit.

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

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