



PRIME MINISTER

*****PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP
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Recently the World Bank measured our vast natural resources against our small population and declared that Australians are the richest people on Earth.

I think we were all a bit startled by this, even though I also think that in some ways we are even wealthier than the World Bank knows.

But we shouldn't read their report too literally. Wealth can be measured in a number of ways, and this way points as much to the potential as the reality.

I think we should read it as a reminder that the potential is there to make Australia one of the truly prosperous and fair societies of the 21st century.

It reminds us that reaching our potential depends on us - on the Australian people. On what we do with this continent and its wealth, its environment, its culture and heritage, its place in what has become the most dynamic region on earth.

And tonight is also a reminder of that.

No policy adopted by Australian government since Federation has done more to fulfil our potential than the post-war migration programs.

We very often talk about our cultural diversity as if it were purely cultural - as if it were primarily a matter of food and festivals.

Yet, whether they were British and Irish migrants in the 19th century, or central and southern European migrants in the last half of the 20th, the real measure of their contribution is in their energy and vision - in their industry and entrepreneurship.

And in the affection and loyalty they developed for this country.

Australia's cultural diversity is indeed one of the great advantages of being a contemporary Australian. Our social cohesion is one of our great assets.

And no less are we served by the ambition, dedication and skills of migrant businessmen and women. Think of some of the great businesses of post-war Australia and a lot of non-Anglo Saxon names come to mind - people who came here from their devastated homelands, who cut the painter with their past, and made this the home of their hopes and ambitions.

And we have all profited from their efforts.

Tonight we pay tribute to the people who are continuing this tradition. People who are making their lives here, investing their energy in Australia.

These awards recognise the role that our cultural diversity can play in our economic future.

We have with us tonight people from all over the world who live and run businesses in Australia.

Who all pursue their personal ambitions and serve the Australian national enterprise.

That's the key - the key to multiculturalism, and the key to Australia's future.

Individual enterprise, collective spirit. Different cultures, one nation.

Let me thank all those responsible for organising this evening especially the National Australia Bank.

Let me congratulate the business people who are receiving tonight's awards - and those countless others who every day pursue their hopes and ambitions in Australia and serve their country well.