



PRIME MINISTER

19 September 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP
LAUNCH OF AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS INTERNET SITE
TOKYO - JAPAN**

E&OE.....

Thank you very much for those words of introduction. Those of you who have attended my earlier speech will know that this is the first occasion that I've visited Japan as Prime Minister and I'm particularly happy to be asked to inaugurate the web site which will make yet another contribution, an important one, to enhancing the business and economic links between Australian and Japan.

I thought Australia had a well earned reputation for voraciously devouring new technology but I do not think we can possibly match a rate of growth of 10 per cent a month which was mentioned as the rate at which internet use is now occurring in Japan.

We clearly have in common a rapid assimilation with the new technology and I think the contribution that this site and the contribution that the internet generally will make will be particularly apparent in the area of small and medium sized businesses. One of the remarkable features of the communications revolution of recent times is the way in which the tools of that revolution - the personal computer, the facsimile machine and the mobile telephone - have in a sense empowered small business and dismantled many of the market barriers and the costs involved in world-wide information seeking and the way in which this site in its own small but very important way will improve the access to small and medium sized businesses to market opportunities, is in many respects its most attractive feature.

I understand that through the opening of this site Australia is taking a lead that no other foreign agency has a site of this capacity, sophistication or breadth and in the long term the site is a further means of developing Australia's commercial and national image amongst the Japanese people.

One of the features of a facility such as this is that it equalises the opportunity for people wanting access in whether they come from regional areas or large cities and the Australians amongst us will understand that that will have a particular resonance in relation to recent political debate. For example Japanese retailers looking for sources for importing food will be guided directly to options of buying Atlantic salmon from Tasmania and live abalone from Ulladulla and so on.

This internet, this site can help deliver good business results but at the end of the day because it is all about working hard and keeping one's competitiveness up to the mark, a constant theme of the economic relationship between Australia and Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen, I congratulate those responsible for this site and I have very great pleasure in declaring it officially open. Thank you.