

28 April 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
ADDRESS TO STATE DINNER
IN HONOUR OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN
MR RYUTARO HASHIMOTO**

E&OE.....

Mr and Mrs Hashimoto, Mr Tim Fischer, the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia; Mr Kim Beazley, the Leader of the Opposition; my other parliamentary colleagues; your excellencies, distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen.

It is a special pleasure to welcome to Australia the Prime Minister of Japan. I welcome him as the leader of a nation with which Australia has developed very deep and close and important relationships over the last 40 years. I do so in the fortieth year since the signing of that very important milestone in the relationship between Australia and Japan and that is the commerce agreement of 1957. And I will come to the importance of that agreement and the part that it has played in laying the foundation of what is Australia's most important economic relationship in a moment. On a personal note, it is a pleasure for me to return the great and warm hospitality that the Prime Minister extended to me last year when I visited Tokyo. I welcome Mrs Hashimoto as well, and can I say if they revisit Australia, and I certainly hope they do, I am certain that they will choose to visit us on another occasion and come from a different direction.

You see, they celebrated their wedding anniversary on the 27th of April and they came from the United...(applause)... well, I don't know that Mrs Hashimoto is going to applaud quite as warmly about what I am about to say. You see they left the United States on the 26th of April and crossed the international date line and succeeded in missing their wedding anniversary. I think there is some diplomatic price that will be paid somewhere for that. It certainly ought not to be that of our very charming Japanese ambassador Mr Sarto, who is very warmly and well regarded in the Canberra community.

But to both of you a very warm Australian welcome is extended, and can I say that all Australians will share the sense of relief that I know the Prime Minister and the rest of the Japanese nation feel about the successful resolution of the very difficult hostage crisis in Peru.

There is of course no nation in the world with which Australia has a deeper, a richer or more important economic association than Australia has with Japan. It really began in earnest when the former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Sir John McEwen, with great courage at the time pioneered the Japan/Australia commerce agreement in 1957. From then the relationship has grown and deepened and diversified, Australia and Japan have a very close and complementary relationship. Japan is undeniably Australia's best market. It is a market that's built not only on exports of minerals, but also a market built upon a very diversified economic association. And of course the relationship between Australia and Japan epitomises the modern commitment of successive Australian governments of both political persuasions to the economic and political association that Australia has developed and will continue to develop with the nations of the Asia Pacific region. Australia and Japan are both full participants in the Asia Pacific region. Each of our nations makes its own particular contribution to those associations.

I welcome Mr Hashimoto as a Prime Minister of Japan who has displayed great political courage and particular political skills. He has embarked upon a very dynamic and important economic and administrative reform programme. He has been a self-starter in economic reform within Japan. It has been his personal conviction that outward looking economic reforms are important to Japan's future rather than a response to outside pressure. He showed particular diplomatic skill in negotiating a successful resolution of outstanding matters between the United States and Japan over the Okinawa bases. And the joint declaration of the Prime Minister of Japan and President Clinton in May of 1996 gave contemporary and fresh expression and an enduring quality to the relationship, important as it is to us and to the rest of the region between the United States and Japan.

There are many attitudes that Australia and Japan share in common. Both of us appreciate the importance of our respective alliances with the United States. Both of us value the continued presence, the fulsome presence of the United States in the Asia Pacific region. Both of us respect and support the overarching importance of the APEC association. It is the most visible and the most important expression of our common destiny as partners in the Asia Pacific region. And both of us appreciate the importance of an effective engagement of China, not only in the affairs of the region but also in the affairs of the entire world.

There is little doubt that a sensible embrace of China as a full partner in the Asia Pacific region on proper terms and with proper understandings is an important foreign policy goal of both our countries. There are areas of course where we share common concerns and as I indicated earlier today, one of the matters that I will be canvassing with the Prime Minister in our discussions tomorrow will be the particular concerns that Australia has about the implications of the proposals for climate change. Australia is in a particularly difficult position on this issue. Perhaps uniquely, Australia is a developed country which is simultaneously a net exporter of energy and it is very

important that the very legitimate concerns of Australia and Australians, and not only of the Australian business community but particularly including them be known not only by Japan but also by our other trading partners. I would like to take this opportunity tonight Prime Minister to re-affirm the very strong support that my government extends to Japan's aspiration to become a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations. That has been a policy position of a number of governments in Australia for some years and I want to make it plain in your presence that my Government will continue to give very strong support to your aspirations in that regard. I have spoken Mr Prime Minister of the very important economic and political links that exist between our two countries. They are important and your visit to Australia will help to further cement those links. They will help to remind Australians of just how valuable a market Japan continues to be for our country. They will help to bring home to Australians the long continuity of the contribution that Japanese foreign investment has made to the development of the Australian economy and it is an opportunity for me as Prime Minister of Australia to emphasise the continued importance of foreign investment in this country and to reject some of the simplistic criticisms that are from time to time made of the role of foreign investment in the development of Australia. And I want to make it clear that without the constant flow of capital over the years from nations such as Japan and the United States and Britain and others who have invested in Australia, the standard of living that we now enjoy in this country would not be nearly so high.

But important as those economic and political links undoubtedly are, there is of course another dimension to the rich relationship between our two countries. And that dimension of course is made up of the people to people links that over the years have developed. Last year 800 000 Japanese people visited Australia. The cultural links, the sister to sister city links, the educational links, the exchange visits, the growing recognition of the importance of Japan, the enormous growth in the number of Australian students who have learnt and can now speak Japanese and the astonishing way in which the knowledge of and the teaching of and an understanding of the Japanese language has supplanted that of any other foreign language in Australia over the last 20 years is an illustration that it is not just a dollar-yen relationship, it is also a relationship which is built on a growing mutual appreciation of different cultures and a growing understanding of a shared destiny in our part of the world.

Can I say to you Mr Prime Minister that I enjoyed your company immensely when I was in Tokyo. I found you a very warm and engaging host. I found the welcome that you extended to me and my party very touching indeed and I have looked forward very enthusiastically to the opportunity of welcoming you as Prime Minister to Australia. I hope you can come again, and come again as Prime Minister. You and your wife will always be welcome here, not only as the Prime Minister of Japan but also for your own very delightful personalities. I very much hope that you both enjoy your brief but important visit to Australia and I have much pleasure in inviting the Leader of the Opposition Mr Kim Beazley to endorse my remarks.

Thank you.