

Gillard's address to Parliament

12:26 PM Wednesday Feb 16, 2011

Mr Speaker

Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet

Leader of the Opposition and party leaders

Honourable Members

It is truly a privilege to be the first Australian Prime Minister, indeed the first foreign head of government, to address members of the Parliament of New Zealand.

I accept your welcome to this historic chamber as a profound tribute to the friendship between our nations and our people.

I also acknowledge it has been some time since a full bilateral visit by an Australian Prime Minister ...

... and I'm glad to be able to put that to right.

But more than that, I don't want familiarity to slide into forgetfulness.

I therefore announce that Mr Key and I have agreed to restore the pattern of regular Prime Ministerial exchanges that we have had in the past.

I look forward to hosting Prime Ministerial talks in Australia next year.

And I look forward to coming back to New Zealand in 2013.

Mr Speaker,

It is a great honour to address members of this parliament and through it, the people you represent.

Yours is one of the oldest continuous democratic legislatures in the world.

The first to recognise the right of women to vote.

A leader in reconciliation with its First Peoples.

Among the first parliaments to respond to the challenge of climate change by putting a price on carbon.

New Zealand may be a small nation.



Julia Gillard and John Key enter Parliament.
Photo / Mark Mitchell

But one with a bold vision of its place in the world.

For Australia, New Zealand is the natural partner in all that we believe and all that we hope for.

As I look around this historic House, the plaques and wreaths commemorating battles from the Boer War to Vietnam are snapshots of the shared and lasting bonds between our two nations.

Our ties were indelibly forged in hardship and mateship, from Gallipoli and the Somme to Tobruk, Korea and beyond.

Our soldiers, as has been said, came "from the uttermost ends of the earth".

And wherever Australian and New Zealand blood has been shed, it remains sacred ground.

Sacred because when our young men were sent to far shores, they went not for wealth or gain.

But to defend common values and a treasured way of life.

The freedom to speak and pray and write.

The freedom to elect leaders and stand safe under the rule of law.

The freedom to succeed that drew men like Peter Fraser and Keith Holyoake from the most modest background to the highest office.

These are what ANZAC means.

A story of courage and conviction told and retold in homes and schools, in the pubs and clubs, throughout the length and breadth of both lands.

A story also infused by the freedom from deference and formality that makes Australians and New Zealanders so different from anyone else and yet so very like each other.

But ANZAC is not a legend confined to records or books.

It is a living story.

A story that lives in the courage of Willie Apiata, Mark Donaldson and Ben Roberts-Smith.

The ANZAC spirit will receive a practical expression from next month when our personnel join together in the new Ready Response Force headquarters to be based in Brisbane.

This Force will provide a robust capability to meet contingencies, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief across the region we love so much.

And, of course, the ANZAC spirit lives on in the most strategically challenging theatre of our times, Afghanistan.

Again, a conflict against those – terrorists – who threaten our cherished way of life and against whom we must prevail.

Today I stand before this Parliament and pay tribute to the men and women of our armed forces.

The road is hard and the price can be very high.

Just two days ago, I attended the funeral of Corporal Richard Atkinson, the 22nd Australian to be killed in Afghanistan.

I embraced his family and felt, deeply, their immeasurable grief.

New Zealand has not been spared this anguish.

Not in the past, with the death of Lieutenant Tim O'Donnell, the first member of the New Zealand Defence Force to fall in Afghanistan.

And not today, with the terrible news of another sad loss for New Zealand, the death of Private Mila.

We grieve for these men and their families as we grieve for our own.

Because the ANZAC story speaks for both our nations.

An imperishable Trans-Tasman bond.

They can never be replaced, our fallen. But they shall never be forgotten.

Mr Speaker,

In the 1890s, there was a possibility that New Zealand and Australia might formally have joined their destinies to each other.

A relic of that aspiration even remains in our Constitution to this day.

But it was never necessary.

Our founders could not have imagined the extraordinary events that would bring our nations far closer than any words or any laws.

Not forged in meeting rooms by old men wearing suits.

But by young men in trenches wearing slouch hats and lemon squeezers.

That is why I say Australia has many alliances and friendships around the world.

Economic and defence partnerships of every kind.

But New Zealand alone is family.

When those 29 men never came home from the Pike River mine, we didn't just mourn for the two Australians.

We mourned for them all.

Family.

When Pike River exploded, New Zealand didn't have to ask Australia to send help.

We just did.

And when natural disasters hit Australia this summer,

New Zealand didn't need to be asked to lend a hand.

You just did.

And our gratitude is boundless.

Prime Minister,

Your predecessor, Sir John Hall said there were 1200 reasons that separated Australia and New Zealand:

– the 1200 miles of the Tasman Sea.

The Australia–New Zealand memorial in Canberra tells a very different story.

It is a sculpture unlike any of the other memorials that enshrine my nation's capital.

It is a simple, graceful curve of bronze, representing the handle of a basket used traditionally to collect flax seed.

It embodies the Maori saying that we each hold one handle of the basket.

Shared effort.

Shared memory.

Shared sacrifice.

Underneath that memorial is etched a poem by the New Zealand poet Jenny Bornholdt.

In it she describes the Tasman not as a barrier, but a bridge: "a bridge of faith."

A faith anchored and bonded in the past.

But also a faith directed resolutely towards the future.

Mr Speaker,

It is true we have done great things in the past.

Remarkable things.

Not just in war but in peace as well.

We took sheltered, insular economies and opened them to the world through the remarkable reforms of the 1980s and 90s.

At the same time we opened our economies to each other...

... creating a degree of integration that is unparalleled throughout the world.

It was the first bilateral trade agreement of its kind in the world.

It remains the gold standard in trade liberalisation.

It was not an easy decision as Robert Muldoon and Malcolm Fraser grappled with the realities of a fast-changing world.

But the Agreement was achieved, and it has served us well.

There was another author of CER who deserves our acknowledgement, a great New Zealand diplomat and politician, Hugh Templeton.

It will be my very special honour this afternoon to invest Mr Templeton with an Honorary Order of Australia for his pivotal role in establishing the CER.

Hugh Templeton's career is the story of the modern New Zealand.

He went to London as a junior diplomat in 1954, representing a nation that, like Australia, relied on primary production, sheltered behind tariff walls and called Great Britain "home".

But as the 70s and 80s unfolded, Hugh and his fellow leaders on both sides of the Tasman and both sides of politics knew it was time to change.

Britain had joined with Europe.

Asia's economic miracle was unfolding.

We could not afford to be left behind.

And we were not.

Our leaders found the courage to change, and those changes were hard.

Perhaps even harder on New Zealand than Australia.

But those decisions were right then, and they remain right now.

CER has been an enduring foundation for new ventures such as the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement and the Single Economic Market initiative.

Thanks to these agreements, our nations are closer than ever before.

Goods and services flow freely.

Our insolvency and copyright laws have been harmonised, along with competition and financial services policy.

Our citizens can work in their chosen profession in each country thanks to mutual recognition.

Students in each country pay only domestic fees for their education.

Reforms unprecedented in their scope and ambition.

Reforms that are hard.

But reforms that have worked.

Two-way goods trade between our two countries has grown at 8 per cent a year since CER.

Trans-Tasman trade is worth around A\$21 billion or NZ\$27 billion a year.

More Australian businesses export to New Zealand than to any other country.

And New Zealand's top export market is Australia.

Now it's time to write the next chapter as we journey towards a Single Economic Market.

During my visit, I've been pleased to discuss with Prime Minister Key the excellent progress being achieved on the SmartGate project to create borderless travel between our two countries.

A joint study will commence this month to examine how we create a truly "domestic-like" aviation experience.

In addition, Mr Speaker,

Prime Minister Key and I will today sign the Investment Protocol to CER, a significant milestone for our two countries.

The Protocol will make investment simpler and cheaper, creating employment and opportunity on both sides of the Tasman.

For New Zealand, this agreement provides the most liberalised access to the Australian investment market.

For Australia, it makes CER our most liberal and comprehensive trade agreement.

And as family, that is how it should be.

But friends,

The "bridge of faith" extends not just to the past, not just to today.

But to the future.

Today, the world changes more in a decade than it used to change in a century.

And we must deepen our resolve to reform and adapt.

We need to embrace the transformative possibilities that will create the high-skill, high-tech economies of the future.

The possibilities opened up by high speed broadband.

Clean energy.

Smart manufacturing.

Creative industries.

World class skills and training.

All underpinned by rigorous fiscal discipline, constant structural reform and an unswerving commitment to free trade.

In that context, let me be clear that Australia accepts the verdict of the global umpire and will implement the WTO rulings on the importation of New Zealand apples into Australia.

We accept the obligations of free trade, just as we embrace the possibilities of free trade.

Mr Speaker,

For Australia, these possibilities are keenly sharpened in the context of the unprecedented change unfolding in the Asia-Pacific.

China's rise, India's growth and the emergence of Indonesia, are changing the strategic contours of the region.

As the global balance of power shifts to the Asia-Pacific, it will throw up real challenges that will need to be collectively managed.

Challenges associated with the inevitable strategic flux brought by the changes unfolding in the Asia-Pacific.

And broader challenges brought by globalisation, such as climate change, food security, natural disasters, people smuggling and pandemics.

But it will also create tremendous opportunities for those brave enough to seize them.

We should not fear this future but embrace it.

Together, we have enduring sources of strength.

The strength we find in each other.

And the strength we find in our people and our history and our values.

If we don't shape the future we want, we may well face a future not of our choosing.

And Australia and New Zealand have never been ones to sit on the sidelines of history.

We are both stable, progressive, well-governed countries, respected for our pragmatism and our ideas.

We have highly mobile and educated populations.

We have competitive and resilient economies.

And we have highly capable and effective armed forces.

Harnessed in partnership, these will allow us to confront difficulties and grasp opportunities.

This is why our two nations must remain active and engaged:

Reforming our own economies.

Uniting ourselves across the Tasman.

And reaching out together to the world beyond.

Before us we have the prospect of a Trans Pacific Partnership.

Perhaps the greatest economic opportunity for our two nations since CER.

I'm proud to say that New Zealand has led the way as one of the Trans Pacific Partnership founding partners since 2005.

I was proud to stand with Prime Minister Key, President Obama and our seven other partners in November last year...

... pledging to the make the expanded Partnership a reality by the time of APEC this year.

The Partnership could be a stepping stone to an Asia Pacific Free Trade Area.

If we achieve that, we will create a free trade community as significant as the EU or NAFTA.

A zone of trade, investment, jobs as big as the Pacific itself.

To do this, we will need not just our own efforts.

But the commitment and energy of many others, foremost our great friend and ally the United States.

An active, engaged America is a fundamental feature of the international system that underpins our stability, security and prosperity.

Australia, like New Zealand, remains deeply committed to this international system and we will work

with key emerging players – not least China and India – to ensure that it continues to deliver the benefits both our peoples have enjoyed for so long.

Mr Speaker,

We know we can meet the challenges of tomorrow because we've done great things before.

But in the last century, the conflicts and the issues that defined the world were fought out in another hemisphere.

Today they are decided here.

This is the Asia Pacific century, and we are at its heart.

Here under the southern cross, emblazoned on both our flags, we have created two of the most successful societies in the contemporary world.

Two advanced, multicultural democracies, tied by tradition and affection to the old world, but anchored firmly in the new.

This is our time.

A time for optimism.

Because our best days lie ahead.

That is why I come here on this journey of hope.

To celebrate all that is best in us.

And bring closer the future that awaits our grasp.

Drawing together.

Reforming.

Reaching out to the world.

And achieving more together than we ever could alone.

Thank you for the privilege of addressing you today.

You honour me.

And you honour my country.

Kia Ora.