

Fair suck of the sav

22 August 2018

Rt Hon Winston Peters speech to National Press Club - Canberra

First, let's start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land that we meet on and pay respects to their elders, past and present.

Thank you, Sabra Lane, National Press Club Chair and ABC Chief Political Correspondent, for your invitation to speak here today.

One can't but reflect on the last 36 hours in Australian politics, given that tomorrow morning we fly to Vanuatu where issues such as political stability will be discussed.

When staff suggested we should tackle the topic of "working together" what flashes through one's mind is a first experience of working with Australians. It's of a young New Zealander seeking to make his way in the world. And that transpired to being given a job, working first for BHP in Newcastle on the blast furnace floor and then deep in a tunnel in the Snowy Mountains.

It was hard, hot, physical and very dangerous work. It taught much about Australia, its development, and about being a labourer. It also led to a decision to go to law school and become a politician – it was easier.

This visit to Canberra is the six monthly foreign ministers meeting with the Hon Julie Bishop. She visited New Zealand in February and we see each other regularly at the various international forums we both attend.

Today's discussions with the Minister, and her colleagues, were productive, as in fact they usually are. When we say we have a "good working relationship" that actually does mean we have a "good working relationship."

One small fact worth noting is that on this day twelve months ago the New Zealand Parliament was dissolved. It was the first step on the path to a General Election which delivered the Labour – New Zealand First Coalition Government in which one is privileged to serve as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

And so our purpose here today, nearly one year into our government's administration, is to state how important and productive the Australia-New Zealand relationship remains, regardless of what differences we may have.

And to also emphasise the importance of Australia and New Zealand working together in our Pacific neighbourhood at a time of remarkable, sometimes alarming, change.

Neighbours

As our biggest economic partner, and home to more than half a million Kiwis, Australia matters more to us than we do to you. Even so, it bears recalling that our size and single market means New Zealand adds another “Queensland” to the Australian economy.

More Australian businesses export to New Zealand than any other destination, making our market essential to 18,000 of your small and medium sized enterprises and their employees.

Perhaps as importantly for the political animals amongst us, poll after poll shows Australians and New Zealanders feel more fondly about one another than we do about any other country on earth.

That affinity does not mean we always agree with one another. A hallmark of a healthy, vibrant relationship is our capacity to embrace difference and to deal with disagreement in a calm, productive fashion. This is true of the way in which we are approaching our differences of view over the treatment of some New Zealanders living in Australia.

While we understand and respect your Government’s right to set its own policies on foreign criminals, many New Zealanders question the deportation of Kiwi passport holders to a country they may never really have known because they left at such a young age. And our attention cannot but be drawn by the deportation of people who have not yet been found guilty of crimes in an Australian court of law.

Now, protection of the community is a core responsibility of any government and we are not suggesting these cases are clear cut. But New Zealanders’ sense of injustice is rooted in the fact the half a million Kiwis living in Australia are overwhelmingly contributors to your society.

New Zealanders living here have higher incomes and are more likely to be in full time employment than even Australian nationals. And they pay more taxes per head than any other members of Australian society. So the case for giving them a fair go - or as Australians sometimes put it - giving us a fair suck of the sav, is very strong indeed.

And the best argument we have to offer is an argument on legal principle. We both have judicial systems which have evolved from the British legal tradition. It a tradition which developed the important concepts of natural justice and habeas corpus. These are not concepts we should lose sight of.

Delivering direction in diplomacy, development and defence

In the ten months since our Government was sworn in, we have put momentum behind our diplomacy, our development assistance, and our defence force.

We have initiated a Pacific reset to seek greater engagement and influence in the region. Our words are being followed by resources. We have shifted the dial with

a 30% increase in New Zealand's development assistance budget over the next three years.

Of course New Zealand has global interests as well. Our government is also reinvesting in our diplomatic capability. This year we provided funding to create fifty new full time positions in our Foreign Ministry to reinforce our diplomatic presence. At a time of global turbulence we must ensure New Zealand's voice is both present and heard.

New Zealand has also reviewed its defence policy settings. Last month, we released our Strategic Defence Policy Statement. It describes the significant changes in New Zealand's (and Australia's) strategic environment that we need to respond to. Challenges once conceived as "future trends" have become today's realities. Great power competition is back, rules and norms that defined the global and regional order are under pressure, and the impacts of climate change are tangible.

The New Zealand Strategic Defence Policy Statement also informs the military equipment choices we make over the next few months as we update our Defence Capability Plan.

Already, we have made one major acquisition decision. We will replace our six P3 Orions, with four state-of-the-art P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft. New Zealand also has a range of defence platforms approaching the end of their life, not least the airlift capability embodied in our 1960s-era C-130 Hercules.

And there is no graver decision that a government can take than putting its men and women in uniform in harm's way. Our government faces a weighty set of decisions over our military deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Sinai.

Australia and New Zealand working on our Pacific Ambition

You will have got the sense that we are resetting New Zealand's voice and resources in world affairs. You will also have a sense that working together with Australia is a central consideration in the choices we make - whether those are in diplomacy, development or defence.

Working with Australia is also central to our combined interests in the Pacific – a region when the tides of external interest are rising not ebbing.

This, of course, is nothing new. The Pacific has long been prone to both the interest, and indeed the lack of interest, of foreign powers. Whether that is through nuclear testing in the 1970s – which undeniably shaped my generation's views on global affairs - or through the exploitation of the region's fisheries and forestry resources; or through attempts to obtain the region's diplomatic support; or even its diplomatic recognition.

This is a second stint as a foreign minister and there are contrasts since then. One is that Pacific island countries have developed a much greater sense of sovereignty and independence in recent years.

Their leaders have also options that were not available before – options about whom to seek development assistance from, and on what terms, and options about whose models of development to follow. That throws up challenges and choices that Pacific nations did not have to manage, even just a few years ago.

Against this backdrop, our eyes are wide open to the fact that we cannot take our influence in the Pacific for granted. We need to be clear that in seeking to use our influence for the better, we are not about trying to control our Pacific neighbours, economically or politically. Instead, we want to work with Pacific countries to support their independence and self-sufficiency.

We cannot do this alone. As we seek ourselves to be more present in the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand need to work together to bring other partners in as well.

And the time to bring in those other partners is ideal. Many other countries are recalibrating their approach towards the Pacific. And the driver of that recalibration is through a strategic lens.

Earlier this year, the United Kingdom announced its plans to open three new diplomatic posts in the Pacific region.

In our own recent diplomatic discussions, ranging from visiting the Japanese government through to meeting the European Union, there has been all-round acknowledgements of the importance of the region and an expressed desire to engage with development work

And, when in Beijing in May, we were able to share our vision, discussing the importance of ensuring that engagement in our region is in the best interests of the Pacific Island countries.

Even with all of these regional partnerships, no two countries have a greater positive impact than Australia and New Zealand. There has never been a time since 1945 that it has been so important that we work together to influence peace and stability in the Pacific, helping those nations to improve their prosperity.

That was amply demonstrated again this year when Cyclone Gita struck in Tonga, Fiji and Samoa. Our two countries were again the first responders. And our support went well beyond the immediate relief phase and into the rebuild.

Given Australia and New Zealand are two of only nine countries that can claim a line of unbroken democracy since 1854, it is apt that it was us, working together, that ensured Tonga's Parliament could meet just a few short weeks after Cyclone Gita flattened its old Legislative Assembly building. And we are committed to working together to continue to strengthen the Parliamentary tradition in Tonga and elsewhere.

There is much that we must do together in the region.

It is safe to say the Pacific reset has triggered an enormous work stream for New Zealand officials in what we seek to change, especially with our development

funding. The views of the Australian government are welcomed in our policy formulation.

As Minister there are a range of areas requiring serious work. This includes a need to foster greater economic self-reliance. Helping provide resilient infrastructure. Improving governance support. And promoting the values which Australia and New Zealand stand for.

So in conclusion, in terms of diplomacy, development or defence, the New Zealand government is charting a decisive course. Whether it is acquiring appropriate military hardware or spending money effectively in the Pacific, we are backing our words through the investment of real resources.

You can expect our Government to remain forthrightly engaged on the issues that matter to us. We are at home in the Pacific. The Pacific is in our peoples DNA and has been for nigh on a thousand years. We belong here and not somewhere else. We are determined to make a difference in the wider world, and be a strong, predictable partner for all the nations in our neighbourhood and indeed for Canberra.

It certainly is the time when we need to reflect deeply on partnership, allies, and friends.

In this age of global power-struggle, and in this age of disinformation, we must cling to the heavily under-valued currency of loyalty, friendship, and of trust.

These are values Australia and New Zealand have forged from our long running adherence to democracy.

Values which were forged on the battlefields of Gallipoli and in the following conflicts which our descendants endured.

Values which continue to be forged today by cooperation and mutual engagement in around the world.

Cooperation like our joint work to build police capacity in the Pacific Islands; our work on anti-smuggling; our advocacy for the environment and our oceans; and our emergency response cooperation following natural disasters.

We co-operate closely on the international stage in fora such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth on issues such as the use of the death penalty, women's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

These very principles and values of partnership and which will hold true to the challenges we will face in the future.

And the best way to conquer those challenges ahead is by working together.

Thank you.

This speech was first [published](#) by the New Zealand government.