

President of Nauru's visit to Australia

I am pleased to welcome His Excellency the Honourable Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and Madam Louisa Waqa to Australia from 5-9 April 2017.

This visit will provide a valuable opportunity to reaffirm the friendship between Australia and the Republic of Nauru, and will allow us to explore ways to strengthen the many links between our two nations.

Australia and Nauru share a strong interest in the stability and prosperity of the Pacific region. We enjoy close cooperation on combatting the scourge of people smuggling. Australia is also Nauru's largest trade, investment and development partner.

The visit will provide the opportunity for President Waqa to meet with officials from the Asian Development Bank, and share in lessons learnt from Australia's infrastructure and sustainable energy facilities.

President Waqa will visit Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. I look forward to meeting with President Waqa and Madam Louisa Waqa during their time in Australia.

Outcomes of President Ghani's visit to Australia

It has been an honour to welcome President Ashraf Ghani to Australia this week, the first sitting President of Afghanistan to visit our nation.

President Ghani's visit has highlighted the strong and enduring links between the Afghan and Australian people, including through the service in Afghanistan of the men and women of the Australian Defence Force, diplomats and civilians.

This historic visit has also underscored the growing partnership between our nations and has been a valuable opportunity to discuss our ongoing security and development cooperation.

Since 2001 we have supported Afghanistan in its efforts to tackle terrorism and build a stronger, more stable and resilient nation.

Afghanistan has made real progress during this period, particularly in

education, healthcare, women's empowerment and human rights – improving the everyday lives of Afghans.

As part of the international coalition, we are continuing our commitment to Afghanistan with ADF personnel currently deployed to support the NATO-led Train, Advise and Assist Resolute Support mission. This includes annual support for Afghanistan's National Security and Defence Forces (ANSDF).

To date we have provided approximately USD \$360 million through the Afghan National Army Trust Fund to help equip and sustain the ANSDF. This support will continue, with an additional USD \$80 million per annum through to 2020. Alongside the international community, Australia renewed this commitment at the 2016 NATO Leader's Summit in Warsaw.

Defence is a long-standing area of cooperation between our nations. I am pleased to announce that Australia remains committed to the successful Redwing Counter Improvised Explosive Device programme, and will continue to support the refurbishment of Afghan Mi-17 helicopters. For the first time, Defence will also sponsor two Afghan officer cadets to attend Royal Military College Duntroon.

President Ghani's visit has been fruitful and culminated in enhanced cooperation across a number of fields.

During this visit, our governments signed a memorandum of understanding for a Afghanistan-Australia Development Partnership 2017-2020 (\$320 million over 4 years, 2017-2020), re-affirming Australia's funding commitments made at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (October 2016).

Under this Partnership, we agreed to establish new areas of cooperation, including an economic infrastructure advisory facility to scope and develop critical economic infrastructure in partnership with international development banks. We also agreed a range of measures to empower women and girls, improve agricultural productivity and the management of water, train Afghan civil servants and support anti-corruption initiatives.

And we signed a new agreement between Geoscience Australia and the Afghanistan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to strengthen scientific and technical cooperation in earth sciences to help advance the sustainable management of Afghanistan's energy, mineral and water resources.

Australia is proud to work with Afghanistan as it strives to become more prosperous, secure and self-reliant.

Doorstop with the Treasurer, The Hon.

Scott Morrison MP

PRIME MINISTER:

Another Australian business success story. What Daniel Zovko and his partners have done here is created a great business, a great Canberra business that is thriving. Its growing, it's got 33 employees, 10 contractors and they are going to be direct beneficiaries of the tax cuts that we have secured through the Senate last week. That means the owners will have more money to invest in their business. They have been investing everything they've made. This is their business. They have created this. They've provided these jobs and we're backing them. They will have access to the instant asset write-off now as a company with a turnover of less than \$10 million. We have raised that threshold from \$2 to \$10 (million) and of course they will benefit this year from the reduction in company tax for a business, for this business from 30 per cent to 27.5 per cent. And as they grow, hopefully to \$25 million next year, if they do that, they will still get the 2.5 per cent tax relief, and then \$50 million the following year.

This is what our tax cuts are all about. They are backing Australian businesses. This is a tangible way for Australian businesses, small and medium businesses to be supported, to have the money that enables them to invest in their business and in hiring more employees, bringing more Australians in to work here, that's the drive, that's the incentive that we're providing.

This is all about jobs, it's all about economic growth. It is the best way that we can ensure that they have the incentive to invest and to employ.

And as the Treasurer will no doubt say more about, the big question now is what is Labor going to do? Is Labor going to go to the next election and say to Daniel Zovko and his partners, and hundreds of thousands of other Australian businesses, we're going to jack up your taxes? We're going to penalise you for your hard work and your success? That's the test now on Mr Shorten. Is Labor going to amp up and accelerate its war against business?

TREASURER:

Thank you Prime Minister, it's great to be here with the Prime Minister today and Daniel and his partners and the 33 employees, Australian employees who are here working in this business who are part of its success. Those 33 employees are part of 6.5 million employees across the country who are in businesses that will benefit from the tax changes we were able to secure last week.

Some 3.2 million businesses, 6.5 million employees, that's more than half the labour force in Australia is in businesses that will benefit from these tax changes.

And what we've seen in this business, is the business grow from \$900,000 to

\$9 million in turn over and they're shooting to be bigger than \$10 million.

Yesterday I was in a business in Peakhurst, there are just under \$2 million and they want to be over \$2 million and they also benefit from the tax cuts that we've been able to achieve.

And what you see in this business and in smaller businesses than this and larger businesses than this, is you see businesses constantly backing themselves by reinvesting. That's what the tax cuts do. That is the practical tangible demonstration of what these tax cuts do.

Now as the Prime Minister has rightly said, last week in the Parliament, the Labor Party, Bill Shorten, Chris Bowen, all the Labor Party members voted against a tax cut for this business. They voted against a tax cut for businesses all around the country. And they need to say right now are they going to hold to that position? Because if they are not going to hold to that position then they should be upfront with businesses like Dan's here and then they should be upfront about how they're going to pay for the \$4.3 billion that that is a cost to their own forward estimates. And so they have a lot of explaining to do. They've either got to tell Dan and the 33 employees who work here that they're going to put their taxes up or they need to explain just now how they are going to afford the promises they're putting out there.

I mean 80 per cent of Labor's schools policy is unfunded, unfunded by continuing on with the tax cuts that we've been able to secure.

So that's Labor's problem. They need to explain it. But for the business here, for Dan and his employees in particular, they are the beneficiaries of this Government getting things done.

PRIME MINISTER:

Can I just say before we go onto questions, can I say that the thoughts and prayers of all Australians are with the families of those whose lives have been lost in the floods following Tropical Cyclone Debbie and we share the anxiety and concern of those who have loved ones that are missing in the floods.

This has been a natural disaster that has spread the length and breadth of the east coast of Australia. Nature has flung her worst at Australians, which brought out the best. The solidarity, the cooperation – I've seen it myself yesterday and last week – Australians pulling together, Australian Defence Forces, emergency services, police and the community and all levels of government working together to clean up, repair the damage and get back on their feet.

But it's a tough time for those communities and of course in Rockhampton in particular, the peak of the flood is yet to come. They'll see that tomorrow. And our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Rockhampton and there is considerable resources going into ensuring that so far as possible, the consequences of that flood there are mitigated.

But I just want to emphasise one very, very important point. Do not go into flooded waters. Don't try to drive through them or swim through them or walk through them. If it's flooded, forget it. Even in areas where the flood waters have subsided, there will still be flooded roads, flooded crossings. Don't venture into them. Follow scrupulously the advice of the authorities. They know how to manage the situation, if you take their advice, you and your family will be safe.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, you talk about jobs and growth. Do we yet know what the tax cuts passed last Friday will mean? How many jobs will be created? Or how much growth dividend will add to the economy?

PRIME MINISTER:

It will add substantial economic growth. It's a real stimulus.

I know that the Labor Party must be in a parallel universe, it's not surprising, most of them have never, vast majority of them have never worked in the private sector let alone started a business like Daniel Zovko has.

Let me tell you back in the real world where most Australians live, they know that if you increase business taxes, you'll get less business. If you increase taxes on investment, you'll get less investment. If you lower business taxes, you leave more for the owners to reinvest. How do you think this has been built? This has been built because these guys have worked hard, they've saved, they've made some money and they've ploughed it back into the business again and again. That's what small business does.

So frankly the enterprise of Australia, the jobs of Australians, 87 per cent of Australian jobs are in the private sector. And the idea that the Labor Party has, the Labor Party seems to think that you can keep on increasing taxes and people will keep on investing and people will keep on employing. They are kidding themselves. They're not dreaming, they're having a nightmare. That is a Labor economic nightmare for everybody else. They don't understand business. They don't understand enterprise. They don't understand the spirit, the spirit of investment, the spirit of growth. That's what motivates these people. That's why there are 33 people working here as employees and 10 contractors, because Daniel and his partners had the vision and the confidence to invest and we're backing them.

JOURNALIST:

Speaking of tax, Prime Minister, how taxing is it that you have the former Prime Minister every time the Government has a win, speaking out. This time he's spoken out about the horse-trading to get this deal through. Surely that's irking you to some degree?

PRIME MINISTER:

We stand by our record on the Senate. Just think about what we've been able to do since the election. So just since the election, not so long ago, nine

months ago or so – we’ve secured the passage of the Australian Building and Construction Commission legislation, which we had been unable to get through in the previous parliament. The Registered Organisations Bill, together those two laws have restored the rule of law to the industrial workplace. They’ve restored the rule of law in particular to the construction sector.

We brought in the biggest reforms to child care in a generation. Massive reforms making it fairer, more available, benefitting overwhelmingly people on lower and middle incomes. A massive reform, again, that couldn’t be got through the previous parliament.

In addition to that, we’ve now succeeded in reducing personal income tax. Scott Morrison didn’t try to put up personal income tax. He didn’t put up personal income tax. He, as a treasurer, reduced it through the Senate and we’ve now succeeded in securing as you know – and that’s why we’re here today – tax cuts for businesses up to turnovers of \$50 million, employing, as Scott said, more than half of the Australian workforce.

So that’s what we’re doing. We’re getting stuff through the Senate. We’re delivering, we’re governing, we’re proving that if you’re prepared to negotiate, you can get things done in the 45th Parliament.

JOURNALIST:

And that’s what the Abbott government couldn’t do – is that what you’re saying?

PRIME MINISTER:

You run the commentary, I’ll deliver on Government.

TREASURER:

But given you’re asking about achievements – more than, around \$25 billion worth of budget improvement measures implemented since the last election. Almost \$25 billion. Now, that was a hard chore in the last parliament and we’ve been able to get savings implemented as a Government since the election that had previously alluded us by taking the approach we have which is to focus on getting the outcome. The Australian people want their governments to get the results and the Turnbull Government is getting the results.

JOURNALIST:

On the company tax cuts – so far no one in your Government will give specific figures about the benefits to the economy. Why is that? Have you done the modelling or is it just not there? Why won’t you give us specific figures?

TREASURER:

The Government doesn’t need to be convinced about the need to give small and medium sized businesses a tax cut. The Labor Party needs to be convinced about that.

JOURNALIST:

No, I'm sorry – I'm asking you.

TREASURER:

That is why the Labor Party is putting this issue around the gallery now for the last week, they're putting it out there – 'Oh you need to know what the econometric model is'.

I tell you what, if you go down the pub and you talk to small business people, they're not talking about econometric models. What they're talking about is how they're going to grow their businesses. If they're a tradie, if they're Dan and the team here, I've referred to the chocolatier out in Penrith, there is the real estate agency up in Brisbane, there is the tool making business in Adelaide – they're not looking for econometric models. They're looking for governments to take action, cut their taxes, give them access to the instant asset write off.

This Government, the Turnbull Government understands how business works. We focus on the things that we know makes a difference because our life's experience, our background in businesses, particularly the Prime Minister but so many in our team, we know that is the right thing to do.

So I ask you this question – the Labor Party thought it was a good idea, they were prepared to vote for a tax cut for businesses up to \$2 million, so they obviously know that if you cut taxes for businesses, it is a good thing. Now we believe that should be extended right across the economy and we've been able to secure tax cuts for businesses up to \$50 million. We don't need to be convinced of the merits of that policy, the Labor Party does so I suggest you ask them.

JOURNALIST:

It is not about the opposition though, I am sorry Treasurer, it is about providing some evidence for us. If you're saying –

TREASURER:

Our modelling was done on the entire tax package and that is what we're committed to. It lifts the GDP of the country by 1 per cent permanently.

JOURNALIST:

But you've only passed it up to \$50 million –

TREASURER:

That's what the modelling produces and we remain committed to the whole plan. The only people who want to stick with the current legislated savings and not even that it would seem is the Labor Party. So we're committed to the entire package and our modelling is based on the entire package.

JOURNALIST:

Just back on the Senate – Tony Abbott said that you shouldn't make the wrong deals just to get something right through. Do you think that you've been making the right deals?

PRIME MINISTER:

Absolutely, of course we have. And we've been delivering. The results are there.

Ultimately the Australian people elected the 45th Parliament, every single one of them, members and senators, and they expect us to get on with the job. Now we have to secure the passage of legislation through the Senate – we need the support of the crossbench if Labor and the Greens oppose us.

We've been successful in that and what we've demonstrated is that we can achieve the passage of our agenda through the Senate. And as Scott and I have both noted, we have now secured against all the critics, there were some people that said we wouldn't be able to govern after the election, right, many in the press gallery, wise commentators said that.

Both of the double dissolution bills are now law.

Our tax cuts, personal income tax passed.

Child care reforms passed.

All of the business tax cuts that were set to be delivered in this term of Parliament are now passed.

So what we're demonstrating is that we know how to govern, we know how to deliver, we are delivering on our promises. That's what the public want us to do. It's what they're entitled to expect and we are doing it for them.

JOURNALIST:

Can I ask about the PaTH Programme?

TREASURER:

Sorry – the PaTH Programme?

JOURNALIST:

It needs a piece of legislation that is yet to pass the senate – will you roll out that program without it yet passing? And what tax implications will that have for those in the program?

TREASURER:

We are very confident of being able to take this through the Senate based on our record of getting things through the Senate.

I think it is very disappointing that once again the Labor Party have been working against trying to get young unemployed people into jobs.

I mean, I was at a business yesterday, they have a turnover of between \$1-\$2 million, they are going to take on someone as part of this PaTH Programme and they're going to hopefully give that young person an apprenticeship at the end of going through that PaTH Programme. Now getting young unemployed people, particularly people who have been unemployed for a while into jobs is what I thought would actually unite the Parliament.

And the fact that the Labor Party is working against getting young unemployed people through this very innovative program which small business in particular want to embrace – small businesses want to give people a go.

This business here has a number of apprenticeships already. They're the biggest employer, we understand, of stonemasons apprentices in the country. Now, they're a business that wants to give people a go. So many businesses want to give young people a go and the PaTH Programme ensures that they can do that in a much more positive way for that business without taking on many of the risks that they currently would have to do which prevents them from giving young people a go.

So my message to the Labor Party is put that stop stop sign away. It's got stop on both sides. Whether it is trying to get businesses growing, whether it is trying to get young people into work, they are constantly saying 'stop, stop, stop' and that is no way to grow an economy.

I mean if you had an electron microscope, you could not find Labor's growth plan because it does not exist.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, would you like to make any comments on what happened in St Petersburg overnight?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, thank you.

We condemn utterly the attack on the St Petersburg metro overnight.

This is a reminder that the threat of terrorism is a thoroughly global one. And indeed, as the President of Afghanistan and I were reflecting on this last night also in our meetings.

So we send our thoughts and prayers, our condolences to the families of the victims of the attack in St Petersburg. At this stage we are not aware of whether any Australians were involved, our Embassy is making its inquiries urgently to ascertain that. Obviously many Australians will have friends and family in Russia at the moment they should seek to contact them. If they can't contact them they can contact the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade hotline.

Also please pay close attention to the travel advisory for Russia and St Petersburg as it is being updated on the DFAT traveller website.

But this is a reminder as I said that terrorism is a global threat to all nations, who need to work together to combat it everywhere in the world. This is a growing threat of terrorism and whatever other differences we may have between nations we have a common interest in stopping this terrorist menace.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, can I ask about the President of Afghanistan, just quickly sorry, your meeting with him last night, did you make any commitment to extra resources for Afghanistan?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we, I advised him that we have decided and this was decided some time ago to extend our, continue our military commitment through for another year, through to 2018 and he's very appreciative of that. As you heard his remarks, he paid tribute to the 42 Australians that have paid the supreme sacrifice in Afghanistan. He thanked the Australian people and he thanked, acknowledged in particular the 18,500 Australians who have served in that very long war. But we are a substantial contributor to the defence and support of Afghanistan both through our 270 military personnel who are there at present, mostly at the Officer Academy, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy in Kabul which I visited and also of course in other capacities as well. But also we are a substantial aid donor through AusAID but also we make a substantial contribution to their defence budget.

So we are very strong partners and President Ghani is very grateful for that and he's acknowledged that.

And we also in return acknowledge his leadership and the way he is fighting to restore peace to Afghanistan but also the way in which he is ensuring that the Government empowers women and girls, ensuring that it is transparent, that he stamps out corruption, that its more accountable. He has many challenges but I believe, as we know, Australia and our allies are absolutely committed to supporting the efforts to restore peace and develop a prosperous future for the people of Afghanistan.

Thanks.

[ENDS]

[Doorstop in Lismore with Kevin Hogan](#)

MP, Member for Page

KEVIN HOGAN, MEMBER FOR PAGE: It's good to have the Prime Minister in town, albeit today not under ideal circumstances. I thank Malcolm for being here. Obviously, we as a community – Lismore as a community and indeed the wider region – has been absolutely devastated by this flood event that occurred in the last few days to the extent that you do not have to walk far around the CBD area to hear heartbreaking stories.

I invited Malcolm immediately to come to this community to hear those stories. There is one thing about seeing things on television or hearing stories on the radio or reading them in the newspaper – there is another thing about eyeballing someone who is devastated and heartbroken by an event. And Prime Minister, I thank you for being here today to hear our stories, to see and to witness our community and the distress that it is in, and I thank you for being here today.

PRIME MINISTER: Kevin, thank you and can I just say the heartbreaking stories that Kevin spoke about – we've heard.

This has been a devastating flood here in Lismore. Right through New South Wales and Queensland, we have seen nature flinging her worst at Australians, but it always brings out the best in Australians. You see the resilience of the business people here, the families here, cleaning up, getting on with life, getting recovering. And what about the charity, the love, that is shown by the SES, the emergency services, the Australian Defence Force, federal, state and local government, working together with thousands of volunteers.

How many volunteers are now in the region here?

ANDREW McPHEE, REGIONAL CONTROLLER SES: Sir, there are in excess of 500 SES volunteers supplemented by around 500 from other agencies at the moment and more are coming in as we speak.

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, and we are seeing this right up the east coast. Right up to North Queensland. Enormous solidarity from Australians. We are standing with these communities, supporting them in every way with logistics, with the resources of the Australian Defence Force and, of course, with the financial and emergency support that is so important.

But I want to also say this, as I said, it brings out the best in Australians. We see here at the church, the love that they are showing, the support for their community, whether it is soup and meals, whether it is going around providing the emotional support that people need.

Kevin, you have got a really strong community.

Here is the Mayor, Isaac. Everyone is pulling together, aren't they?

ISAAC SMITH, MAYOR OF LISMORE: They are, absolutely. It has been a fantastic effort. People are staying positive. We know we can recover from this and

everyone is pulling together to make sure it happens.

PRIME MINISTER: We are all in it together.

Every Australian is backing you and all of the communities that are affected – Murwillumbah, going right up, up into North Queensland where we were last week, where the storm first hit.

Mark Crossweller, the Director General for Emergency Management, you are making sure that all of the federal resources are backing up the state and local government services?

MARK CROSWELLER, DIRECTOR GENERAL, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA: That is correct, Prime Minister. We've got the Defence Force involved, Geoscience Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology. We have also coordinated all of the state and territory assistance into New South Wales.

It has been a huge effort, a large, coordinated effort. All states and territories assisting wherever they are able to do so.

The Commonwealth is assisting through the Australian Defence Force and Geoscience Australia and the bureau. And an absolute connection between community, local government, state and Commonwealth.

PRIME MINISTER: That is fantastic.

Well, Kevin, as you said, it would be better to be here in happier times, but this shows the resilience, the love, the solidarity of the people of this community.

As I said, nature flings her worst at Australians and it brings out the best in Australians.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, were you prepared for what you saw when you arrived here in Lismore?

PRIME MINISTER: Kevin's right, there is no substitute for being here on the ground. Obviously we have seen the pictures and I was in touch speaking to the Mayor and Kevin on Friday – in fact, as the flood was hitting. We have been staying closely in touch with it but seeing it first-hand and the impact, treasured possessions, all of a life's work, all of the assets of a business flung out onto the pavement – that is gut-wrenching stuff. And that is why we are backing the people of this community and every community affected by these storms and floods. We are backing them all to ensure they recover and they are back in business and people will be coming back to Lismore and enjoying Steve's coffee. In fact, I think he will have the coffee on tomorrow.

MAYOR OF LISMORE: He is.

JOURNALIST: Steve just told you though that most people in Lismore don't have flood insurance and that low-interest loans aren't going to cut it for them and he thinks they deserve more, the sort of treatment that multi-nationals,

like car manufacturers get. What do you say to that?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, there is enormous support being provided to the community and there will be, and already we have the National Disaster Relief Assurances available. We're doing that through the state government so people who have lost possessions and so forth can have them, will be able to, it's means tested of course, but will be able to recover them.

The low-interest loans are a very important part of business recovery. We talked to a lady who you would have seen in the street who talked about the theatre group here who have lost their props and lost their curtains. Again, there are grants available for not-for-profits like that.

And, of course, there is a full suite of support for a region like this that is recovering.

JOURNALIST: If you don't give them special consideration, you could come back here in six months and see a ghost town. That is his exact words?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I think Kevin, the Mayor, and I have all got a lot of confidence in this city. This is a strong city. It has seen floods before and it has recovered and we have got more support for flood recovery now than we ever had in our nation's history.

JOURNALIST: Can you offer federal grants to businesses and homeowners instead of low interest loans? Is that an option?

PRIME MINISTER: There are grants that are available to homeowners and that is through the state government's program which we fund 50 per cent of – so it is a joint state-federal program.

As far as businesses are concerned, the support through Category C is through a low-interest loan, a concessional loan, and that has been very important for farmers and businesses, including small businesses, of course.

JOURNALIST: Steve who you spoke to say it's not going to be enough and he's on the ground, he's directly affected. Will you consider more?

PRIME MINISTER: Well there is a substantial program of support for the community which we will be working out with the local government, with Isaac and with the state government. It is a real collaboration. I can assure you we are committed to seeing these communities and many others like Lismore right up the coast, right up into North Queensland ensuring that they have the support to recover.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, could I ask a question? Timeliness really is an issue here. Grants, et cetera, are all very well and loans, but there are people here whose businesses won't survive another month unless they get help really quickly. How fast will this move?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, the money and the support is available immediately. Again, it is administered by the state government. In terms of income support, the disaster relief allowance will be available here in this local

government area and again that will be available through, that's available through Centrelink?

MARK CROSWELLER: Yes, that's right.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, so that will be available through Centrelink and all of those details will be made public and in the course of the next few days.

JOURNALIST: The Mayor also spoke to you about the levee bank. How important is preventing and investing in that?

PRIME MINISTER: Well prevention is the key and mitigation is the key and it is important as we rebuild infrastructure, to learn the lessons from the events that damaged it on this occasion.

So, we would certainly look very favorably on increasing the height of the levee if that is the decision that is taken by the local community. Obviously, there are a number of factors to take into account, as you'd be aware, but, clearly, it is important that we make Lismore as resilient to flood as possible.

It is a river town, a river city, I should say, so it's always been vulnerable to floods, but, clearly, a higher levee has a lot to commend it.

OK, thank you all very much.

[President of Afghanistan's visit to Australia](#)

I am pleased to welcome His Excellency Dr Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Australia from 2-5 April.

This visit, the first to Australia by an Afghan President, reflects the strong bond between our two nations.

Afghanistan and Australia share a solid connection which has been forged over more than a century of shared history and contact between our two peoples.

From the early Afghan cameleers in the 1860s, through to the Australian military effort to free Afghanistan of terrorism, the two nations have long maintained a healthy partnership, built on a foundation of mutual respect.

During this visit, discussions will focus on our ongoing security and development cooperation to help Afghanistan in its efforts to become more prosperous, secure and self-reliant.

In particular, we will seek to enhance partnership between our nations in a

number of fields including women's and girls' empowerment, public sector capacity building and agricultural productivity.

I look forward to meeting with President Ghani during this historic visit.