

**LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION – TRANSCRIPT – WELCOMING
REMARKS TO THE HONOURABLE JAMES MARAPE MP PRIME
MINISTER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA, CANBERRA**

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

It will come as no surprise to our guest of honour here today that I wholeheartedly support the hospitable words which Prime Minister Albanese has delivered on behalf of the Government.

In that same spirit, I extend to you – Prime Minister Marape, to Madam Marape, to the Ministers, and other members of your delegation – a very, very warm welcome on behalf of the Coalition and Federal Opposition.

Friends are dear. And you and your people are our dear friends.

While you are your country's eighth Prime Minister, you are the first Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea to address a joint sitting of the Australian Parliament – as has been noted.

This is indeed a historic moment.

Our two nations share a history which has brought you here today, and your presence here carries with it the weight of that shared history.

In reflecting on that shared history, we reignite our appreciation for Australia and Papua New Guinea's deep connections and how we formed an abiding friendship.

There was, of course, our prehistoric beginnings – when Australia and New Guinea were a single continent.

Even after melting ice sheets and rising seas separated us some 8,000 years ago, contact was maintained via trade between our two coastal indigenous populations who island-hopped across the Torres Strait.

The Enlightenment and age of empires saw European exploration and colonisation of the Pacific between the 16th and 19th centuries.

That inevitability brought modernity in all its forms and shades.

By the 20th century, our two countries' fates were interlocked through a series of events over almost seven decades.

We were bound together in 1906 with Australia's administration of the Territory of Papua – formerly British New Guinea.

Bonds tightened further with Australia's governing of New Guinea – formerly German New Guinea – from 1920 after the defeat and withdrawal of the Kaiser's forces.

The Second World War, as the Prime Minister rightly pointed out, saw us face a mutual threat.

As brothers in arms, we fought against the invading Imperial Japanese Forces – most doggedly on the Kokoda Track.

Amidst the hell of war and the sacrifice which came from service, we formed an imperishable friendship.

That fellowship is encapsulated in Peter Ryan's *Fear Drive My Feet* – an account of his experiences and survival as an Australian intelligence operative behind enemy lines.

Peter was supported by villagers, carriers and police-boys whom he remembered with affection and described as 'dignified' and 'indispensable'.

To this day, Australians commemorate the tenacity of your soldiers, the bravery of your Coastwatchers, and the compassion of your 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' – who all helped turn the tide of the war.

Soon after the war, two territories became one in 1949.

In a changing and decolonising world, as the want for trusteeship waned, wishes, of course, for independence grew.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies championed the right of the people of Papua and New Guinea to 'choose their own future'.

Indeed, in March 1962, Menzies expressed Australia's 'great sense of moral responsibility for the welfare of the people to whom we stand in a special relationship'.

Menzies spoke of our aim to 'create and develop the capacity of independent self-government'.

Off the back of a remarkable nation-building endeavour, Papua New Guinea's independence arrived in 1975.

It was an achievement of two peoples – those who desired their freedom and those who wished and supported their friends to attain it.

Prime Minister Marape:

In the almost half century since the birth of your independent nation, Papua New Guinea and Australia have accomplished much together.

Personal friendships, professional relationships, and government partnerships have grown in substance and, indeed, number across the years.

I was honoured to be part of the previous Australian Government under the Coalition which – together with you and your colleagues in the last Government – opened new pipelines of enterprise and collaboration.

Through Australia's establishment of the New Colombo Plan in 2014, our students have had the privilege to study, work and learn in PNG.

In 2015, we launched the Pacific Leadership and Governance Precinct which has seen thousands of your public servants receive training at both our universities.

Australia was honoured to support PNG in hosting a highly successful APEC meeting in 2018.

And in the same year, we handed over the first Guardian class patrol boat – which now number four in your defence force.

So, I pay true tribute to you, Prime Minister Marape, and indeed former Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison.

Together, your leadership and vision saw us elevate our special relationship in 2020 to a Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership.

Perhaps there was no prouder moment in recent history than our cooperation during the pandemic.

We fought it together, Prime Minister.

And Australia was proud to provide assistance to PNG in distributing vaccines, delivering personal protective equipment when it wasn't otherwise available, and deploying medical teams and defence force personnel.

We also combatted the scourge of illegal fishing and people smuggling in our region together, and for that we are very grateful.

Prime Minister Marape:

At the Lowy Institute in 2019, you spoke about writing 'a new book for Papua New Guinea'.

Under your leadership, your country is penning the first chapters of that new book.

Like you, I am confident it will be filled with many stories of success.

And I'm certain Australia will feature in those chapters both as a partner of choice and close friend of Papua New Guinea.

In your Lowy address, I was moved by your words about Papua New Guinea seizing its own destiny and not allowing external forces to dictate the direction you take.

Australia supports you and your country in that noble endeavour in the same spirit we welcomed your independence in 1975.

Of course, we find ourselves in precarious times.

We find ourselves in times of emboldened autocrats who have no hesitation in using inducements, coercion, and outright force against other nations to realise their zero-sum ambitions.

These autocrats – who use the carrot one day and the stick the next – have a complete disregard for sovereignty, for law, and liberty.

Our forebears knew only too well the price paid for insecurity and aggression which goes undeterred.

Indeed, within the deep soil of your country and flowing through the blood of Papua New Guineans and Australians is the memory of the service and sacrifice of our forebears.

May our memory of them impel us to become stronger together through our defence and security cooperation.

And may we form fellowships of greater strength with our mutual partners and friends in the Pacific and wider region.

From strength comes security. And from security comes stability. And from stability comes prosperity.

Prime Minister Marape: You are a dear friend to Australia.

We welcome you dearly to the Australian Parliament.

We look forward most sincerely to your address with anticipation, with attentive ears, and with abiding friendship in our hearts.

Thank you.

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