



**“THE INNOVATIVE FUTURE THAT WE ARE IMAGINING”**

MR ONG YE KUNG, ACTING MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, AND SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT – DR LILY NEO AND MR MELVIN YONG

HIGH COMMISSIONERS AND AMBASSADORS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

ON THE EIGHTH OF JANUARY THIS YEAR, PRIME MINISTER LEE ANNOUNCED SINGAPORE’S NEWEST INNOVATION VENTURE, THE RESEARCH INNOVATION ENTERPRISE 2020. IN LAUNCHING THIS VENTURE, HE SPOKE OF THE “INFINITE POSSIBILITIES” OPENED BY INNOVATION.

JUST FIVE WEEKS EARLIER, PRIME MINISTER TURNBULL LAUNCHED AUSTRALIA’S NATIONAL INNOVATION AND SCIENCE AGENDA WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS “ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL” to AUSTRALIA’S FUTURE.

FOR DYNAMIC NATIONS LIKE AUSTRALIA AND SINGAPORE, INNOVATION IS A KEY PART OF OUR FUTURES. IN A WORLD THAT REWARDS CREATIVITY AND DEMANDS NEW AND BETTER WAYS TO DO BUSINESS AND GOVERN, NEW LEVELS OF CREATIVITY, INNOVATION , AND EVEN DISRUPTION ARE VITAL.

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HERE AT THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION WE ARE INNOVATING TOO.

WE ARE THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE THINGS THAT LINK AUSTRALIA AND SINGAPORE.

AND WE ARE THINKING CREATIVELY ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE IN OUR PARTNERSHIP IN THE FUTURE.

WE ARE ENVISAGING AN EVEN BRIGHTER TRAJECTORY FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP THAN THE ONE WE ENJOY TODAY ...

... A FUTURE BASED ON THE MANY THINGS WE SHARE – SOME HISTORY, A LANGUAGE, A PRACTICAL MINDSET, A SIMILAR STANDARD OF LIVING, AND A REGION FULL OF PROSPECT.

... AND A FUTURE BASED EQUALLY ON HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT – A FUTURE BUILT IN FULL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE COMPLEMENTARY ENDOWMENTS OF A LARGE ISLAND CONTINENT, WITH A DEEP RESOURCE AND AGRICULTURAL BASE, BUT FAR FROM THE CENTRE OF OUR REGION; AND A SMALL NATION, CONSTRAINED IN LAND AND RESOURCES, BUT AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPING ASIA, AND DEEPLY NETWORKED WITH IT.

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TURNING TO THE ELEMENTS OF OUR PARTNERSHIP, WE ARE IMAGINING A FUTURE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP EVEN CLOSER THAN THE ONE WE HAVE TODAY.

THE SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES AND THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE HAVE WORKED TOGETHER SHOULDER TO SHOULDER FOR DECADES. THEY TRAIN TOGETHER, THEY PLAN TOGETHER, AND THEY OPERATE TOGETHER, INCLUDING TODAY IN THE SKIES OVER THE MIDDLE EAST. AT THE BROAD STRATEGIC LEVEL, IN OUR REGION AND BEYOND, WE ARE ENJOYING STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE.

THIS BASELINE IS STRONG, BUT WE SEE A FUTURE WHERE OUR DEFENCE AND SECURITY LINKS BECOME TIGHTER STILL. WE SEE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING, LEVERAGING OUR COMPLEMENTARY ASSETS, WHILE OUR SECURITY FORCES COLLABORATE EVER MORE CLOSELY TO KEEP US SAFE FROM TERRORISM AND ORGANISED CRIME.

WE ARE ENVISAGING AN EVEN BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR OUR BUSINESS LINKS. SINGAPORE IS ALREADY OUR KEY ECONOMIC PARTNER IN ASEAN, AND OUR FIFTH LARGEST TRADING PARTNER GLOBALLY. BUT OUR AMBITION IS UNQUENCHED. OUR GOVERNMENTS HAVE AGREED THAT AUSTRALIA AND SINGAPORE EMBARK ON A 'CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS' PARTNERSHIP – WITH A REVISED FREE TRADE AGREEMENT, AND NEW COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY ON AGRICULTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND INVESTMENT IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.

WE ARE IMAGINING A FUTURE WHERE THE PEOPLES OF SINGAPORE AND AUSTRALIA ARE EVEN MORE CLOSELY CONNECTED. IN THIS, WE DRAW ON THE HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COLOMBO PLAN, THE LEGIONS OF SINGAPOREANS WHO STUDIED IN AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING NOT LEAST THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC; AND THE CLOSE TIES IN TOURISM AND ACADEMIC EXCHANGE.

TO ELEVATE THESE HIGH BARS, WE HAVE LAUNCHED THE 'NEW COLOMBO PLAN' IN SINGAPORE, BRINGING HUNDREDS OF AUSTRALIANS TO STUDY EACH YEAR AT SINGAPORE'S FINE UNIVERSITIES. THROUGH SMARTGATE, WE HAVE MADE IT EASIER STILL FOR SINGAPOREANS TO TRAVEL TO AUSTRALIA, AND THE NUMBER OF AUSTRALIANS TRAVELLING TO SINGAPORE NOW TOPS ONE MILLION PER YEAR.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IN ENVISAGING A NEW FUTURE FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, WE HAVE MANY PARTNERS. HERE IN SINGAPORE, WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH AN AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY, LED BY AN AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE THAT IS BEST-IN-BREED, AND WHICH SHARES OUR VISION OF DEEPLY ENMESHED ECONOMIES.

AMONG THAT AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY ARE GREAT COMPANIES THAT ARE SUPPORTING OUR CELEBRATION TONIGHT. THEY ARE LED BY JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY, NAB, LENDLEASE, VISY, BHP BILLITON, THE AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AND WOLF BLASS WINES.

AND SUPPORTED BY OUR GOLD SPONSORS: QBE, WESTPAC, SERVCORP AND QANTAS.

WE ARE WORKING WITH A SINGAPORE BUSINESS COMMUNITY THAT IS PARTICIPATING EVER MORE ACTIVELY IN THE AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL SECTOR. SO MUCH SO THAT, IN LAST YEAR, THE FLOW OF INVESTMENT FROM SINGAPORE TO AUSTRALIA WAS THE HIGHEST GLOBALLY – THAT IS, NO OTHER ECONOMY IN THE WORLD INVESTED MORE IN AUSTRALIA IN 2015 THAN SINGAPORE DID.

GREAT SINGAPORE BUSINESSES LIKE FAR EAST, FRASERS AND KEPPEL (WITH MORE THAN \$4 BILLION IN RECENT ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN THEM) HAVE JOINED SINGTEL AND ASCENDAS AS STRATEGIC INVESTORS IN AUSTRALIA.

BEYOND THAT, SINGAPORE POWER HAS COME TOGETHER WITH PARTNERS TO BUILD A PIPELINE THAT WILL LINK FOR THE FIRST TIME AUSTRALIA'S GREAT ENERGY RESOURCES IN ITS CENTRE WITH THE POPULATION CENTRES ON THE EASTERN COAST.

AND SINGAPORE AIRLINES HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL CONNECT CANBERRA, OUR 'BUSH CAPITAL', TO SINGAPORE AND THE WORLD WITH DIRECT AIR FLIGHTS FROM SEPTEMBER.

WE HAVE STRONG PARTNERS IN THE MASSIVE NUMBER OF SINGAPOREANS WHO HAVE EARNED THEIR QUALIFICATIONS FROM AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES - 130,000 ALUMNI, AS BEST WE CAN KEEP UP WITH THEIR NUMBERS. WE ENJOY A PARTNERSHIP WITH THEIR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, THE AAS, WHICH CELEBRATED ITS 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY JUST LAST NOVEMBER.

WE HAVE THE SUPPORT OF A WIDER AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY IN SINGAPORE THAT GIVES BACK TO THIS NATION WHERE WE ARE GUESTS. THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION, WITH MORE THAN 6000 MEMBERS, IS FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, SPORT, AND CHARITY WITH BENEFITS FOR SINGAPOREANS, AUSTRALIANS AND OTHERS ALIKE.

WE ARE WORKING WITH SINGAPORE PARTNERS, LIKE MINISTER ONG AND THE MANY GOVERNMENT SERVANTS HERE TONIGHT, WHO SHARE OUR VISION AND ARE WORKING WITH US TO BRING IT TO FRUITION.

WE HAVE THE COMMITMENT OF OUR LEADERS, PRIME MINISTERS LEE AND TURBULL, WHO HAVE COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO MEET EVERY YEAR, IN AUSTRALIA OR IN SINGAPORE.

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IN ENVISAGING A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP, WE HAVE THE CONFIDENCE BORNE OF SUCCESS IN THE RECENT PAST.

WE CELEBRATED LAST YEAR THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SINGAPORE'S BIRTH AS A NATION, AND FIFTY YEARS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS.

AND WE CELEBRATED WELL. WITH A PRIME MINISTERIAL VISIT TO SINGAPORE, A PROGRAM OF ENGAGEMENT IN SINGAPORE'S HEARTLANDS THAT WE CALLED "50 BRIDGES", THE LOAN OF FOUR

CUDDLY KOALAS TO SINGAPORE ZOO, AND A SET OF MAJOR NEW COMMITMENTS TO DEEPEN OUR LINKS.

OUR LEADERS SIGNED A 'COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP', WHICH SETS THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE THAT WE ARE NOW ENVISAGING.

WE SIGNED NEW AGREEMENTS ON ARTS AND CULTURE, COUNTER-TERRORISM, AND A PLAN TO HARMONISE THE STANDARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN AND SINGAPOREAN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES.

WE DEEPENED FURTHER OUR STRONG POLICE, INTELLIGENCE AND BORDER FORCE LINKS, INCLUDING CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE AND THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE.

AND WE HAD THE STRONGEST YEAR ON RECORD IN BILATERAL INTERACTION. NO FEWER THAN FORTY-FIVE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL AND STATE MINISTERS MADE OFFICIAL VISITS TO SINGAPORE IN THE COURSE OF 2015.

CAPPING A WATERSHED YEAR FOR SENIOR BILATERAL LINKS, HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL MADE A STATE VISIT TO SINGAPORE – SIGNALLING AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL THE STANDING OF OUR PARTNERSHIP, AND ITS TRAJECTORY.

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IN ALL OF THIS, THE TEAM AT THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION HAS MADE A HUGE EFFORT AND ACHIEVED MUCH. I WISH TO THANK IN PARTICULAR OUR DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER ADRIAN LOCHRIN, OUR SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, AND OUR AGENCY HEADS.

OUR INNOVATION EXTENDS TO TONIGHT, WHERE RUTH SPENCE AND HER PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TEAM HAVE FOUND NEW WAYS TO CELEBRATE AUSTRALIA DAY IN SINGAPORE – WITH BBQS, WINE WHISKY, FINE FOOD, SELFIES AND HASHTAGS.... I THANK YOU RUTH AND YOUR TEAM, AND THE MANY AUSTRALIAN PROVIDERS OF GREAT THINGS TO EAT AND DRINK FOR THE 'EPICUREAN ADVENTURE' SET UP FOR US HERE IN THE ATRIUM.

FINALLY LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, CAN I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE TONIGHT AND FOR YOUR PART IN THIS FLOURISHING RELATIONSHIP. I KNOW THAT EVERY PERSON HERE HAS PLAYED A PART IN WHAT HAS BEEN A LANDMARK YEAR FOR US, AND I THANK YOU SINCERELY FOR THAT.

I HOPE YOU WILL ENJOY WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER, AND JOIN US ON THE NEXT PHASE OF THE JOURNEY OF INNOVATION THAT IS THE AUSTRALIA-SINGAPORE PARTNERSHIP.

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