

Remarks – Meeting with The Honorable Michael R. Pence, Vice President of the United States of America

PRIME MINISTER:

Vice President, welcome.

We've had a great discussion and prior to that our families got together and had a good morning tea and enjoyed meeting your wife and your daughters. I know that Karen enjoyed meeting our grandchildren. It was a very warm family event. Welcome.

We are very honoured that you are visiting us, here so early in the term of the Trump Administration. This is the earliest visit by a vice president in the term of a new administration in history.

We recognise that that means more than ever your commitment to our Alliance – an alliance 60 years standing, but an alliance that began in truth nearly a century ago when Australian and American troops went into battle together in the First World War.

Since then, as you know, as the President and I have discussed, Australia has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States in every major conflict in 99 years of our great nations' momentous history.

But we have a lot of history to reflect on – 75 years since the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Milne Bay in Kokoda – those battles where the Japanese advance on Australia was turned, where the Japanese were turned back for the first time. Australians and Americans fought in those momentous conflicts that determined the fate of our nations.

Again, today, we are fighting side-by-side in the Middle East – Anzacs, Americans standing up for our shared values, for freedom and democracy.

That's what binds us together.

That history and our commitment today when our Alliance is more important than ever.

Mr Vice President, welcome. We have a lot to discuss in the here and now and in the history, on which we reflect.

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Thank you Mr Prime Minister and to the Foreign Minister, and to your entire staff, thank you for your warm welcome to Australia.

I bring greetings this morning from the President of the United States. I

spoke to him first thing and he wanted me to pass along his very best regards to you.

And the President wanted me to be here, early in this Administration to reaffirm the strong and historic Alliance between the United States of America and Australia.

As you mentioned this very hour we had soldiers fighting as they have for now more than a century, shoulder-to-shoulder in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In my season of service to the Congress of the United States, I visited down-range to see American troops and I scarcely remember a time that I didn't see the Australian Flag flying as a part of the coalition forces. We honour them.

And my presence here today, at the President's direction is about a reaffirmation of the strong ties in both our security and prosperity.

I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity to spend time with you privately. My wife was extremely impressed with your grandchildren. She doesn't have any yet!

(Laughter)

PRIME MINISTER:

But she nursed little Alice so wonderfully, Daisy said she's welcome to take over babysitting anytime.

(Laughter)

She's certainly very enthusiastic.

FOREIGN MINISTER:

There's a new exchange programme.

(Laughter)

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

But we are just so grateful. The warmth of the welcome of our little family reflects the warmth and the feelings between the people of the United States and the people of Australia. I bring you those good wishes from the President and the American people and I look very much forward to our discussion today.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you so much.

[ENDS]