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## [Remarks at Business Leaders Reception – APEC](#)

### **PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you very much Craig. His Excellency Ngoc Anh, Minister for Science and Technology, representing the Prime Minister, Steven Ciobo, our Trade Minister, provincial leaders, Vice Ministers, ladies and gentlemen.

We all understand the extraordinary economic progress that has been made in Vietnam.

Over the last 30 years Vietnam has developed into a dynamic, middle-income country with one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

It's projected to become one of the world's 20 largest economies within the next 30 years.

This economic success has not been the result of an accident or luck.

It has been the result of deep structural reform and a decision by leaders like the Minister here and his colleagues to open up the economy to international trade and investment.

Now, those are not easy reforms anywhere and I want to commend the Vietnamese leadership for their sustained commitment.

Vietnam's hosting of APEC 2017 is a great opportunity to share this economic success story.

To demonstrate the power of free trade and opening up to the global economy and help to counter the often very vocal advocates of protectionism.

In 2018, Australia and Vietnam will celebrate our 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Over this period, our economic futures have become increasingly entwined.

We are important economic partners and our people-to-people links continue to grow.

The number of Australian companies here tonight with an interest in Vietnam, is ample testament to that and businesses from all economies play a very active role in influencing APEC's agenda.

And of course we must recognise too, that Australia, the most successful multicultural society in the world – well, I can claim that, I am biased, I'm the Prime Minister, but it is true, I'll state the case for that – but there are 300,000 Australians of Vietnamese origin. That represents one of the great strengths in the relationship.

The diversity of our Australian community, its multicultural nature, is one of our greatest assets. We are very proud of our resources, Minister, all of the iron ore and coal and other precious things under the ground, but our best assets – like yours – are the people walking on top of the ground rather than what might be found under it.

As I said in my speech in Perth last weekend, prosperity is a choice; open markets do not happen by themselves. They are choices we must make together.

So we will continue to work together, not just to deepen our bilateral relationship, but also to progress further the economic integration in our region, through forums like APEC and trade agreements like the Trans Pacific Partnership.

The TPP creates rules of the road to match the new economic world in which we're living. It aims at old hidden trade barriers like corruption and new ones like data protectionism. It works to level the playing field for non-

state companies and is designed to defend and extend the freedom to explore, share and capitalise on new ideas. Minister, I was delighted when I came in and you introduced me to a line-up of Vietnamese innovators. It's good to see that you're as passionate about innovation as we are in Australia.

Now over the same period, our economic relationship with Vietnam has experienced a transformation. It's no longer a donor-recipient aid relationship, it's a true economic partnership. Vietnam's middle class is expected to reach 33 million people by 2020 and Australian businesses are already seeing the benefits of that transformation.

Our universities have become a top choice for Vietnamese students, there are more than 20,000 Vietnamese students studying in Australia. Vietnam is the fourth biggest source country for international students for Australia.

Vietnam is our sixth largest market for agricultural products.

Vietnamese consumers are placing increasing importance on fresh and safe food and Australian farmers have a reputation for delivering just that.

More than 75 per cent of the bread used for Vietnam's signature dish banh mi, for example, comes from Australian wheat. So, a taste of Australia every day in traditional Vietnamese food.

[Laughter]

And of course, trade goes two ways. Vietnam is also benefitting from our growing trade relationship with Vietnamese dragon fruit, lychees and mangoes now readily available to Australian consumers.

The important thing to remember though is that the economic relationship goes beyond simply the trade of physical goods. We're laying the foundations for long-term economic growth and the days of relying purely on injections of labour and capital for growth, are behind us.

We need to drive productivity by sharing new ideas and new technologies.

Our innovation partnership is helping Vietnam and Australia prepare for this future.

We're helping Vietnam deliver new forecasting methods to understand the influence of regional mega-trends on its economy and society, drawing on the research of Australia's world leading scientific organisation, the CSIRO.

Our universities are equipping Vietnamese students with the skills and experience to compete in the 21st century economy, building relationships through collaborative centres such as RMIT Vietnam's new Centre of Digital Excellence.

We'll also help strengthen connections between industry and research organisations in Australia and Vietnam to ensure that research is relevant and can be transferred quickly from the laboratory to farms or the factory floor. A great example is the collaboration between CSIRO and Viet UC Seafood

who are both here tonight.

CSIRO have supported Viet UC with new feed technologies, helping Viet UC sell bigger and higher quality prawns. I think we're all in favour of that.

[Laughter]

In fact with Christmas coming, the price of prawns is rising. It's one of the few things politicians don't get blamed for, the rising price of prawns, at least in Australia, perhaps they do in Vietnam.

Anyway, the important thing is that our futures are linked. They depend on free trade. They depend on investment. They depend on innovation. They depend on us working together and as we know, they depend on strong regional security and stability, issues that are more a matter for the East Asia Summit than for APEC, which is an economic conference. But it's wonderful to be here. I want to congratulate you on the enterprise and initiative you're showing as we continue to build and build upon an already strong Australian and Vietnamese economic relationship.

But above all, that relationship is built on people; all of us here and hundreds of thousands of others.

It will continue to deliver as long as we are committed to free trade, investment, open markets; allowing people to use their enterprise and initiative to get ahead and bring us all ahead as our economies grow together.

[Applause]

**[ENDS]**

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## [Doorstop at APEC](#)

### **PRIME MINISTER:**

Welcome to Da Nang, and welcome to APEC.

You know, our prosperity is built on two foundations of free trade and open markets, which is what APEC is all about – it is an economic forum. And of course, national security, regional security, which is what the East Asia Summit is all about.

So here in Da Nang we will be talking about trade and opening up greater opportunities for Australian exporters.

Tomorrow, I will be signing a new free trade agreement with Peru, offering enormous, new opportunities for Australian agriculture and of course service

exports as well. That's a very big opportunity for a very rapidly growing economy in South America.

And of course we will be seeking to take forward the TPP-11.

If we are able to conclude the Trans-Pacific Partnership with 11 countries, not obviously the United States since the Trump Administration decided to pull out, that would bring together economies with a collective GDP of about \$10 trillion. So that is a huge market.

It is the equivalent of entering into, across the 11 TPP countries, 19 new free trade agreements, offering very substantial new opportunities for Australian exporters, raising the level of market access in agriculture, in all manner of physical goods and of course in an unprecedented way in services.

Free trade means more jobs, more prosperity in Australia. That's why we back it so strongly.

And, of course, from the East Asia Summit point of view, the key focuses in the region are counter-terrorism. Of course, we are meeting in Manila where the government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, with Australian assistance, has been battling an ISIL insurgency in the southern Philippines.

And then there is the looming challenge from North Korea, and its reckless and dangerous threats of nuclear war.

So there is a lot to talk about. A lot to resolve.

It is vitally important we continue to galvanise a concerted effort behind strong regional security and the free trade and open markets, that that is then enabled by that security to deliver the prosperity that Australians deserve.

**JOURNALIST:**

Prime Minister, while you will be here to speak trade and security, even in transit here today your office was wrestling to the ground some kind of agreement with Bill Shorten on dual-citizenship. Will you be trying to simultaneously land such an agreement while engaging in these talks here?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, multitasking is the occupational objective of prime ministers.

The position that we presented on Monday was a very reasonable one. One that would enable, set up a process that would enable this issue of citizenship to be resolved. For there to be a full declaration of all the relevant information by members and senators. Some time for the House and the Senate to consider it. And then some time for the House and the Senate to determine which members and senators, if any, should be referred to the High Court.

As you know, we had a meeting with Mr Shorten yesterday. Again, he didn't

bring any particular amendments or counter-proposals.

**JOURNALIST:**

He has now though-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes, he sent me a letter today and I received that and I responded to it in some detail. And I hope that we can reach an agreement.

But, look, if we can't, we will present our resolution in both the House and the Senate.

The reality is the differences are that we are not that far apart.

The important thing is there is full disclosure and that that is done in a way that enables the House and the Senate to form a judgment as to whether to refer people.

**JOURNALIST:**

Should you can't reach an agreement with Bill Shorten will you be looking to send his suspicious MPs to the High Court? And if you do that, how will that be different to the witch hunt you talked about two days ago?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, it is very straightforward.

I was disappointed that Mr Shorten asked me to agree not to refer MP's of his to the High Court, even though they were admittedly British citizens at the time they nominated for Parliament. I mean, the Constitution says you should only be an Australian citizen.

So these were not people that didn't know they were British citizens, these were people who knew they were British citizens but hadn't got their paperwork done in time to cease to be British citizens at the time they nominated.

Now, look, they have got arguments to present when they get to the High Court, as I am sure they all will.

**JOURNALIST:**

You don't think they've-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

But, look, let's be clear about this, we referred our own people to the High Court when we had advice that they weren't in breach.

Now, when you've got people that were on their own admission UK citizens at the time they nominated and said that they were in compliance with the

Constitution, it really is a bit rich of Mr Shorten to say to me that the government shouldn't vote to refer them.

**JOURNALIST:**

Do you think he is doing the dodgy?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I will be very clear about this – we will vote to refer to the High Court anybody, whether they are on the government side, the Labor side or on the crossbenches, if there are substantial grounds to believe they are not in compliance with the Constitution. To ask me to do anything else is quite unworthy.

And I'm disappointed that he made that request and that he even thought that was a proper thing to do.

The principle that we have to uphold is compliance with the Constitution. The court has delivered a judgment. It is very strict, it is very severe, it is very literal. It wasn't the outcome we sought, as you know, but that's it, they have laid down the law and now our job is to comply with it and that's what I'm committed to ensuring everyone does.

Thanks very much.

**[ENDS]**