

Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan addresses National Press Club of Australia

Thank-you Andrew. Good afternoon everyone.

I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Ngunnawal people, and pay respect to elders past and present.

Thank-you also to the National Press Club for giving me the privilege to speak with you today.

I understand every Australian Prime Minister and Opposition leader for the last 40 years has addressed the National Press Club – so –

I am delighted to be in such great company.

In this job, you learn to never pick a fight with people who buy ink by the barrel and I'm looking at all of you.

However, I hope the journalists in the room today will indulge me in highlighting a recent piece in The Australian.

The article asked if the UK would have the “strategic bandwidth” to focus on the Indo-Pacific, in the light of our immense support for Ukraine.

It is a fair challenge. And one that I want to address head-on.

As the UK's newly appointed Minister for the Indo-Pacific, my answer is that we cannot afford to do anything other than focus on this region.

It is home to half the world's people, and half of projected global growth.

It will have a huge hand to play in the global economy for decades and centuries to come. Particularly through rules-setting alliances such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

It is a glittering hub of innovation, full of natural partners for British scientists, researchers and tech developers.

With the right policies and support, the high growth economies of the Indo Pacific can help lead the world to net zero.

And with 60% of global shipping passing through the region – security and stability here, has a direct impact in British homes and on British businesses.

In short, this region is critical to the UK – to our economy, our security

and to the international rules based system, that both our countries cherish.

Which is why last year, when the UK Government set out our strategic direction for the next decade in our Integrated Review, we committed to pursuing deeper engagement and building stronger relationships and partnerships through an “Indo-Pacific Tilt”. This approach is one which our new Prime Minister is absolutely committed to.

Australia is of course one of our closest and most like-minded partners in the region.

In fact I think there are few countries in the world that enjoy such strong historical, political and cultural bonds as we do together

From the dark days of the Second World War to our joint fight against ISIS, we have stood side-by-side, in defence of our shared values and interests. [AUKUS](#) is perhaps a continuation of that tradition.

So when it comes to our Indo-Pacific Tilt, Australia is very much a magnetic force for us.

A reliable partner, whose counsel and judgement we respect.

Over the last couple of years we have been working to cement our Indo Pacific ‘Tilt’ through new agreements, stronger relationships and new institutional bonds.

This demonstrates that we do have the “strategic bandwidth” to focus on the Indo-Pacific, and to continue our support to Ukraine.

I will say more about those ties in a minute, but first I want to reflect on Ukraine.

Russia’s assault on Ukraine is illegal and unjustifiable. And it simply cannot be allowed to succeed.

If we allow Russia to violate another country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, every single international border becomes less secure.

President Putin underestimated the resolve of Ukrainians.

The UK alongside Australia and our international partners, stand united against the Russian government’s egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter.

In January up to 70 Australian Defence Force personnel will deploy to the UK to help provide training to Ukrainian soldiers.

The UK’s total package of military, humanitarian and economic support for Ukraine amounts to nearly £4 billion since the start of the invasion.

We have issued nearly 200,000 visas to enable Ukrainians to find safety in the UK.

That's a commitment of over 7 billion Australian dollars, and the equivalent of relocating the population of Townsville to our shores.

To echo Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific economies and security are indivisible.

Staunch cooperation and prosperous futures are built on so much more than geography.

We are in an era of borderless challenges and competition for knowledge, ideas and global resources.

So influence over energy, critical minerals, alongside innovation and technology, are just as likely to define how states interact and prosper.

Of course we cannot talk about the Indo-Pacific region, without considering the role of China.

The UK will always stand side-by-side with our international partners and allies, and this includes in how we respond to China.

It is important to have dialogue and maintain engagement and bilateral trade with China, a global actor and driver of growth. But China poses a systemic challenge to our shared values and interests when it departs from global rules and norms, and when it aligns itself with aggressive countries like Russia.

Alongside our partners, the UK believes in a free and open Indo-Pacific.

So, I want to reassure you that the UK Government will always stand up for our sovereignty and economic security – and that of our partners.

Let me give you a brief glimpse into the partnerships we've been building right across the Indo Pacific in three broad areas: security and defence; resilience and tackling climate change; and trade and investment.

First, our historic [AUKUS agreement](#) reflects the unique trust between the UK, US and Australia. It reflects our shared values, and our joint commitment to Indo-Pacific security.

We have made good progress on the deal, entering the final stretch of an eighteen-month feasibility study to deliver nuclear-powered submarine capability for Australia.

The UK and Australia share a long and proud history of naval cooperation. But AUKUS will be more than just this important generation of submarines for the Australian Navy.

Our collaboration on cutting edge defence technology will give our countries a competitive edge, ensuring our people are kept safe from harm and enhancing our ability to achieve shared goals, including promoting security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Second, the UK has increased our defence presence in the whole region.

Last year our Carrier Strike Group toured the region engaging with over 40 countries.

Our offshore patrol vessels HMS Spey and HMS Tamar are now stationed in the Indo-Pacific to be able to work with key allies and partners consistently and to build closer relationships and understanding.

HMS Tamar is one of the Royal Navy's newest and greenest ships, and she recently visited Darwin.

HMS Astute, first of her class and one of the most advanced nuclear submarines in the world, docked in Perth last year.

Our maritime partnerships are about promoting the international rules based system, and the fundamental right under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, for maritime vessels to move freely in international waters.

Third, we are working with partners to build their capacity to tackle threats to regional stability.

From illegal and unregulated fishing, to defending maritime law, to tackling serious and organised crime.

We can overcome these challenges by working with allies and partners, listening and responding to regional concerns is at the very heart of our approach.

Listening to the region, and working in partnership, is also central to our approach to building resilience, particularly to climate change.

I have just come from the [12th Conference of the Pacific Community](#) in Vanuatu.

I met with Vanuatu's Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jotham Napat, and learnt about their priorities of their recently-elected government.

They were very clear that Vanuatu is on the front line of the climate emergency.

So we will be working even more closely with them and with other partners to accelerate global action on climate change. Good intentions aren't enough, action and better finance flow to these most vulnerable communities is now imperative.

The UK is also supporting the delivery of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which sets out Pacific countries' vision for a cleaner, safer and more resilient future.

Following the UK's Presidency of COP 26, 90% of the global economy is now committed to net zero, covering 88% of global emissions.

And 90% of the world's forests are now protected under the Glasgow Leaders Declaration for Forests and Land Use.

But keeping the world to a 1.5 degree pathway is the challenge of our time. As Alok Shama said at Sharm El Sheik, just a couple of weeks ago it is really hanging by a thread right now. We can see this in the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Synthesis Report and in Australia's State of the Climate Report released last week.

I am pleased Australia has legislated for a new emissions target of 43% by 2030, and net zero by 2050.

And we welcome Australia's ambition to host COP 31 alongside Pacific partners.

The changes we need to make to our infrastructure and economies are a challenge. But the opportunities on the horizon in the green and clean economy are immense.

In the UK we now have 43% of electricity from renewable sources. We are a global leader in off-shore wind, and we will continue to work with Australia and countries in the region on their own transitions.

I am also delighted to announce a new development a little closer to here in Canberra.

The British High Commission building will soon be home to our new Pacific Development Unit, which will help us deliver even more support for those nations suffering the harmful impacts of climate change.

The third sector of cooperation I will touch upon is trade and investment.

As the former Trade Secretary, I was committed to building the exchange of ideas and technology that we share with Australia.

Last year, we launched the Space Bridge, a new partnership to increase trade, investment, research and collaboration between our space sectors.

The UK is building similar win-win partnerships with economies and sectors across the region.

We gained ASEAN Dialogue Partner status last year, and agreed a Plan of Action over the summer, recognising the importance of ASEAN centrality to maintaining peace and prosperity across the region.

We were the first European country to secure a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with India.

And we intend to be the first European country to accede to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

For the UK, the benefits of membership speak for themselves: access to a high standards, free trade area worth over 16 trillion Australian Dollars a year.

And a potential market of half a billion customers in some of the fastest growing economies on the planet.

But this isn't just about benefits for the UK.

In the CPTPP we will be staunch friends to Australia.

We will be an unequivocal advocate for high standards and greater collaboration on priorities like developing our green and digital economies, and making our supply chains more resilient.

As many of you may know we are finalising the enabling legislation in the UK Parliament for our bilateral free-trade deal with Australia.

As an MP for a rural constituency, I know from sheep farmers in the North East of England that there are strong views on both sides.

But as I tell them, we have achieved a modern, world class, comprehensive deal that is good for the UK and good for Australia.

It won't just end tariffs on goods, and slash red tape for businesses, it will open up opportunities for our citizens to live and work in each other's countries.

There's a golden rule in story-telling, show don't tell.

But I hear you say – that's rich coming from me as I've just spent the last 15 minutes telling you about the UK's commitment to the Indo-Pacific!

So I'll close by showing you what we are doing

I am here, in the region. Our ships are here. Our people are here. Our High Commissions and Consuls across Australia and the Indo-Pacific are here – including six missions across the Pacific Islands, three of which we have opened in the last three years – in Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga.

We are building science, trade and defence partnerships with Australia and our partners across the Indo-Pacific.

We are global Britain, and you are modern Australia.

We celebrate what our countries have already achieved together, and we look ahead to facing the challenges that come together.

Thank you.